MODERN ENGLISH

BY

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TO

N. K.

PREFACE

THE lectures upon which the ten chapters of this little book are based were delivered during the early months of 1924 to teachers in the service of the London County Council. They did not attempt to describe the whole of the structure of Modern English, as this might be supposed to appeal to an observer who had only a speculative interest in the subject. They did no more than sketch some of the features of contemporary speech and writing which are of interest to the speaker, to the practical writer, and to the teacher in the class-room. As with the lectures, so with their outcome in the volume now presented, which is designed to suit the general reader as well as the teacher. For the speaker, writer, and teacher the importance of the features lies less in themselves than in their value for forming the view that each of them holds of his native language. The details may have little value in themselves. But it is vitally important that the Englishman, whether writer or teacher or man in the street, should not view his mother-tongue as otherwise than it really is.

Current English being the subject, not a few of the illustrations have been taken from colloquial

speech and daily newspapers. Although among them an ephemeral idiom may have intruded itself here and there, such sources are more likely to point to future developments than the more careful and dignified, and therefore more 'conservative, language of standard literature.

While historical matter has been avoided as much as possible, it has been thought proper, for the sake of completeness, to include a summary account of the development of English, which will be found in Chapter II. This chapter the reader, if he so desires, can omit without greatly affecting his perusal of the rest.

The debt which the author owes to *The New English Dictionary* will be obvious at several places. The fifth and sixth chapters could not have been written with anything like completeness and confidence but for the information which it yields.

To my friend Professor R. L. G. Ritchie of the University of Birmingham I tender my most grateful thanks for the sedulous care he has taken in reading the proofs, and for the valuable suggestions and criticisms he has made.

The London County Council, by its standing order No. 334, lays upon an official who publishes a book the obligation of stating that the Council is in no way responsible for the opinions expressed by him. That obligation is hereby discharged.

J. H. J.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE teacher's attitude to English is determined by the reasons for which our language is studied in school. In the Elementary School, and in most classes of the Secondary School, these are to enable the pupil to speak well, to write well, to understand his fellows' spoken and written communications, and to appreciate and enjoy something of English Literature. All these are practical aims ; all but the last are obviously utilitarian in the broad sense, and it can be demonstrated that there is a utility-value even in the last. Besides these, there is another reason, which is disclosed by the reflection that clear and efficient thinking is closely connected with a command of clear and efficient expression. Perhaps the last reason is the most important of all.

The teacher, therefore, has to study the English language as it is now. Advanced study of English has, however, been largely historical. The historical method is of extreme value in explaining phenomena by showing how they came to be what they are ; but, if it is pursued

The Teacher's Attitude to English.

Methods of Study.

to the exclusion of all other methods, it can cause a kind of blindness to existing facts, and that is what has happened to English. The historian and the historical student are deeply concerned with the question of origins, and may have but a faint interest in the speech of the year 1924, while any question of development, or any characteristic of the past which has now changed, has but an intermediate interest for the teacher, as teacher. His problem, even when thus simplified, is nevertheless more complex than it at first appears. He has to know English as it is, and in his teaching he has also to remember how English appears to children of various ages and to deal with it in those forms. To the child, whether at three or at thirteen, language presents an appearance quite different from that under which the educated and sophisticated adult apprehends it.

Of late years the place which English occupies in relation to the other subjects of the school curriculum has undergone considerable modification, and has been more clearly defined. Till recently, in Secondary Schools, it was tacitly assumed that boys and girls acquire without formal instruction sufficient facility in the use of their mother-tongue, and in the classical schools English has been subordinated to Latin and Greek. Experience has shown that the assumption was false, for it is a common

The Position of English in the Curriculum of Schools.

complaint that the English public schoolboy is one of the most inarticulate of human beings.

The Elementary School of the past aimed at teaching the practical arts of Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. It did not pretend to impart liberal culture. Indeed, the assumption that the classics were the only possible basis of liberal culture was accepted by the Elementary School, and, as it was manifestly impossible for the Elementary School child to study the classics, the conclusion was drawn that liberal culture was impossible in any kind of Primary School. Further, it was held that Greek and Latin are languages far superior to English, so that even if a liberal culture could be imparted through English, it would necessarily be inferior to that which could be obtained through studying the languages and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome.

Of all the definitions of the new attitude none is more comprehensive and eloquent than that set forth in *The Report on the Teaching of English in England.* In that report the committee declare their belief that a liberal education, in however elementary a form, is desirable for all normal English children, to whatever social rank they belong, that such a culture is attainable by all of them, and that for them English is the best possible basis, and, indeed, the only possible basis, for a liberal education.

The Native Language and Literature as the Basis of Culture.

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The Committee assert this to be true, in equal measure, for children of the upper classes and for children of the lower classes, using these terms in no invidious manner. It is the only possible basis for most English children, because it is the only tongue known to most of them, and the only tongue that can be taught to most of them. It is the best basis, both for them and for those other children who are so fortunate as to have the opportunity of learning foreign languages, because all children make better progress in the tongue they employ every day than they can make in any other. If English were an inferior tongue the case would be different. As it is, English is the equal of any other language ancient or modern, and English literature is as adequate and elevating as any other literature. Any other kind of liberal culture, whether on classical lines, or in humanism by means of modern foreign languages, or by means of scientific and mathematical study, or by means of any other subject, must be built upon this essential and sufficient basis. If English was made the basis of all English education, as it ought to be, it would yield the most powerful force that could be devised for closing the gaps that exist between the various classes of English society, and would also conduce to greater efficiency on the part of the professional man and the worker in commerce and industry.

Such is the contention of the English Committee.

It is a direct denial of the older position. To adopt it, to honour it in the heart as well as on the lips, would mean a revolution in the great Public Schools. Many Secondary and Primary Schools have begun to adopt it, and are using the mother tongue and the native literature as a means of attempting to impart a truly liberal culture. Culture of mind, that is to say a mind well stored, together with the utilitarian ends of enabling the pupil to speak, write, and understand the medium in which he communicates with his fellows—these are the aims which must be pursued by means of the mother tongue in school. The basis of the curriculum has been shifted from Latin to English, from a dead and foreign language, a language of synthetic structure, with numerous terminations, to a living language, the language of our streets and homes, one which is analytic in structure, and one which has few terminations. This is a momentous change.

That English is, and shall remain, a refined, elevated, copious and euphonious language is clearly of great importance to those who have inherited it. In one way or another, we try to take care of it. We are very strict in our criticisms of one another's speech, and many of us strenuously resist innovations, and strive to preserve established standards. We feel that English will deteriorate if we do not take care of it, and that, if it deteriorates, we shall

The Political and Intellectual Importance of the National Speech.

deteriorate with it. This has long been believed, at any rate by a few persons in each generation. In one of his letters Milton says : "Nor do I think it a matter of little moment whether the language of a people be vitiated or refined, whether the popular idiom be erroneous or correct, and I am inclined to believe that when the language in common use in any country becomes irregular and depraved, it is followed by their ruin or their degradation. For what do terms used without skill or meaning, which are at once corrupt and misapplied, denote but a people listless, supine and ripe for servitude ? On the contrary, we have never heard of any people or state which has not flourished in some degree of prosperity as long as their language retained its elegance and its purity." [1]

On the other hand, there are not a few who hold that all the struggles of all the grammarians and all the teachers are vain, that no human

[1] " Neque enim qui sermo, purusne an corruptus, quaeve loquendi proprietas, quotidiana populo sit, parvi interesse arbitrandum est . . . Equidem potius collabente in vitium atque errorem loquendi usu, occasum ejus urbis, remque humilem et obscuram subsequi crediderim ; verba enim partim inscita et putida, partim mendosa, perperam prolata, quid nisi ignavos et oscitantes, et ad servile quidvis jam olim paratos incolarum animos haud levi indicio declarant? Contra, nullum unquam audivimus imperium, nullam civitatem non mediocriter saltem floruisse, quamdiu linguae sua gratia, suusque cultus constitit."—*Prose Works*, ed. Symmons, vol. i, pp. xi–xii, and vol. vi, pp. 117–18.

efforts can alter the course of development which the language is following under the pressure of the natural and unconscious forces that impel it, and that any trifling barrier which they may succeed in erecting is more likely to disfigure English than to improve it. The truth probably lies between these extremes. But it is certain that until we have sought out and found the true nature of our speech, and have set up for our guidance a correct linguistic standard, all our exertions will be futile.

The statement that English is not known by English speakers may seem to be an exaggeration,

Prevalent Ignorance of English. and the argument that because of our intense familiarity with our mother-tongue we are ignorant of it appears to be paradoxical. But the paradox is true, and is merely a particular instance of a general law. The pictures that hang on the walls of our houses are those that we notice least. The more adept a musical performer, the less he attends, the less he is able to attend, to the muscular adjustments he makes in producing notes. The sensations which accompany the movements that our mouths make in speaking have long ago passed below the threshold of consciousness, and have been followed by the sounds themselves. As we speak, the meaning of words often occupies our attention almost exclusively. That is one kind of ignorance of English

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that besets us, the ignorance which is the necessary consequence of automatic action.

There is another kind which is more disastrous in its effects. The speaking vocabulary of the ordinary man is smaller than it ought to be. The cause of this exiguity is largely prejudice. The Englishman of most classes has a strong and healthy dislike of pedantry, and has been led by this distaste into a disapproval of honest and useful learning. He regards what he calls a " long " word with hostility, and suspects the speaker of wishing to make a display. In many circles it is bad form to pass beyond a limited range of vocabulary in ordinary conversation. As most people are not professional writers, this prejudice narrows their vocabulary till they are unable to express their thoughts except by over-working the words they use, and by making them do duty for too many meanings. It is true that the average reading vocabulary, that is to say, the average number of words comprehended, is sufficiently large. But this means that the average man is more passive in his habits of thought than he should be. A rich store of ideas demands the employment of a wide and exact vocabulary, so that ostracism of the terms needful to express one's meaning is nothing less than a mutilation of the mind.

We are, however, not only ignorant of the real nature of English ; we believe it to be different from

what it really is. Owing to the study of Latin, and of a form of grammar which does not suit English, the educated Englishman conceives the structure of English under a purely fanciful form.[1] For example, he does not realize the importance of word-order, nor that the functions of English words can vary almost indefinitely. Further, only a handful of people know what English sounds like. All the rest are deluded by our conventional spelling, which long ago ceased to be a real representation of the sounds, into supposing that English is pronounced more nearly as it is spelt than is the case.

Superstitions about English.

Thus our ignorance is not merely negative ; it is positive error. And, worse still, it is an ignorance which supposes itself to be knowledge, for we believe that we are fully acquainted with the sounds and structure of our mother-tongue, and we are not aware how ruinously we narrow our speaking vocabularies and restrict our forms of expression.

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[1] For a statement such as this it is perhaps safer to claim the shelter of authority. In that case, what authority could be better than that of the representative poet of the classical age ?—" There are many who understand Greek and Latin, and yet are ignorant of their mother tongue. The proprieties and delicacies of the English are known to few " (Dryden, *Preface to Sylvae*).

CHAPTER II

IT is usual to divide English into three historical
divisions, which are: Old English, lasting from
the beginnings till 1150 ; Middle English,
Modern
English. extending from 1150 to 1500 ; and
Modern English, from 1500 to the present
day. In this book, except where otherwise indi-
cated, by Modern English is meant contemporary
English, the English that we speak and write at the
present time.

In its origins English is related, both as regards
vocabulary and as regards structure, most closely
to Scandinavian, Gothic, Dutch, and Ger-
Cognate
Languages man, more distantly to Latin, Greek,
Celtic, and Slavonic, and still more re-
motely to Persian and Sanskrit. The vocabulary
of Old English contained few loan-words, and
its grammatical structure was complicated ; the
vocabulary of Modern English has been enlarged by
borrowings, especially from Latin, Greek, and French,
till it has acquired relationships with all the chief
languages of the globe. In its grammatical struc-
ture, Modern English differs extremely from all the

tongues to which it was originally related, and differs
no less from Old English.

Without going further into detail than the scope
of this book permits, it is impossible to exhibit the
Aryan. relationship that the structure of Old
English bears to the structure of Latin
and Greek. In both, the relations of nouns to
one another and to verbs were indicated by sets
of case-terminations as well as by prepositions,
adjectives possessed three genders and sets of
case-terminations, and the tenses and moods of
the verbs were mainly inflexional.

The relationships of the vocabularies are more
easily shown, as a glance at the following tables will
reveal. The first (on p. 22) contains a few of the
oldest words in the languages, such as names of parts
of the body and of the commonest objects of ex-
perience, and exhibits the more distant connexions
of English, while the second (on p. 23) provides
an illustration of the parallelism that subsisted in
Old English and the other Teutonic languages.

It will be observed that the Sanskrit forms differ
more than the Latin from the English forms : be-
cause of this, and because the number of related
words is smaller in the former than in the latter
case, it has been concluded that the original tongue
from which all these languages must have sprung
as dialects divided at a very early period into a
western group, which itself became the ancestor of

the European languages, and an eastern group, to which Persian and Sanskrit belonged.

There is no extant relic of this original tongue, which is generally called Aryan. It is no more

Modern English	Old English	Latin	Sanskrit
stand	standan	*stā*re	sthā
knee	cnēow	*genu*	jānu
father	fæder	*pater*	pitr
foot	fōt	pes (stem *ped-*)	pād
fish	fisc	*pisc*is	
in	in	in	
long	lang	*long*us	
wind	wind	*vent*us	vatas
mouse	mūs	mūs	mūs
mere	mere	*mare*	
ear	ēare	*aur*is	
sweet	swēte	*suav*is	svadus
hound	hund	*can*is	cvan
have	habban	*hab*ere	
mind	mind	mens	manas
		(stem *ment*)	

The stems are printed in italics.

than a theoretical conception. But, having been reached, the conception is useful; for it enables English to be regarded as a speech which has had an uninterrupted history from a time when it was one with Greek and Latin and Celtic and Slavonic and Sanskrit. Growing by slow degrees less and less like them, and receiving in later ages fresh influences from them, it has become so different from

them that the similarities are now hard to detect.
They are merely vestigial, and English, like each of
these tongues, has acquired a separate individuality
in which the vestiges bear scarcely any part. But
they are still there, and their presence is enough
to prove the common origin.

The closer bond between the vocabularies of·
the Teutonic tongues is nowhere better seen than
in the numerals. The numerals one to
ten, being words very frequently used,
are in all languages among the most stable elements
of the vocabulary.

Teutonic.

Modern English	Old English	Icelandic	Gothic	Latin
one	ān	einn	ains	unus
two	{ twegen twā	tveir	twai	duo
three	ðrī, ðrēo	þrīr	þrija	tres, tria
four	fēower	fjorir	fidwōr	quattuor
five	fīf	finim	fimf	quinque
six	six	sex	saihs	sex
seven	seofon	sjan	sibun	septem
eight	eahta	ātta	ahta'u	octo
nine	nigon	niū	niun	novem
ten	tīen	tiū	taihun	decem

We must suppose that Teutonic existed for a
long time as a single and homogeneous speech be-
fore it split into its various divisions, for, besides
the numerals, a very large number of words in these
divisions are nearly identical in form.

Turning from the correspondences to be found

in the archaic parts of the vocabulary to the structure and contents of Modern English, we find that a very great change has taken place. The number of words borrowed from foreign languages now surpasses the number of native words, and in place of the complicated system of inflexions possessed by Old English, Modern English has very few inflexions, the relations of words to one another in the sentence being indicated by other means. The few inflexions that remain have descended from Old English.

The Development of English.

The course of development has been continuous, but not uniform. Till the end of the Old English period the inflexional system remained, and the forms of the inflexions were strong and distinctive: in the Middle English period much of the grammatical structure persisted, but in form the inflexions had been weakened: at the end of the period they disappeared, and, perhaps as a consequence, grammatical relations had to be indicated by other methods. Modern English (that is, English since 1500) may be described as the period of lost inflexions.

The nature of the tongue in the ninth century may be gathered from the following passage from King Alfred's translation of Orosius' *History of the World*. It is part of an interpolation supposed to have been written by the King himself.

Old English.

Ohthere sæde his hlāforde, Ælfrede cyninge, þæt hē ealra Norðmonna norþmest būde. Hē cwæð þæt hē būde on þæm lande norþweardum wiþ ðā Westsæ. Hē sæde þēah þæt þæt land sīe swīþe lang norþ þonan , ac hit is eall weste, būton on feawum stōwum styccemælum wiciað Finnas on huntoðe on wintra, ond on sumera on fiscaðe be ðære sæ Hē sæde þæt hē æt sumum cirre wolde fandian hū longe þæt land norþryhte læge, oþþe hwæðer ænig monn be norðan þæm wēstenne būde. þā fōr hē norþryhte be þæm lande : lēt him ealne weg þæt wēste land on þæt stēorbord, ond þā widsæ on ðæt bæcbord þrīe dagas. þā wæs hē swā feorr norþ swā þā hwælhuntan firrest faraþ.[1]

The inflexions are printed in italics.

In this passage there are forty-six distinctive and significant inflexions : in the translation there are only seventeen inflexions. Every word in the passage is Teutonic—indeed, every word is Saxon : for the translation, which follows it as simply as possible, four or five terms of Latin origin have had to be used, to preserve natural Modern English style. Agreement of terminations, gender, full case-endings, inflected tenses, and the subjunctive mood

[1] *Translation.*—Ohthere told his lord King Alfred, that he had been farthest north of all the Northmen. He said that he had gone on the land northwards along the western sea, yet he said that the land was very extensive northwards from thence, but it is all waste, except (that) in a few places here and there by the sea dwell Finns (engaged) in hunting in winter, and in fishing in summer. He said that at some time he would investigate how far the land *lay* to the north or whether any man dwelt (or had explored) to the north of the waste. Then he went northwards along the land : all the way he left the waste land on the starboard and the ocean on the larboard, for three days. Then he was as far north as the whale-hunters go.

in subordinate clauses are all found in the Old English, and none of them, except the concord of subject and verb, is present in the translation.

Though in natural circumstances each race retains its own language, it is possible for a people to abandon its own tongue and to take another, and it is also possible for foreigners to be absorbed in large numbers, without any perceptible effect upon the speech. Undoubtedly the race that now inhabits Great Britain is extremely mixed; perhaps a strain derived from neolithic man still survives; certainly the blood of Saxons, Celts, Northmen, Frenchmen, Italians, and Dutch flows in our veins. Even the Teutons who began to come in 449 would not be quite pure in blood. But the English vocabulary was almost pure Teutonic when the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons reached the shores of Britain. Apparently, from the Britons whom they conquered they took over few terms except place-names : most of its Celtic words have been acquired by English in more recent times. The first notable influx of foreign words occurred with the introduction of Christianity and a higher type of civilization by St. Augustine and his monks at the end of the sixth century. From that date Latin words connected with the Church and with ordinary life began to enrich the poverty of English. Many of these were originally Greek and were passed on by Latin to

English. Latin, however (as King Alfred complained), was far from being the universal tongue of the learned in England, as it was on the Continent, and as in later times it came to be in England. It is significant that, while mediæval English legal documents are mostly in Latin or Anglo-French, those that survive from the Old English period are nearly all couched in the vernacular, although contemporary Continental edicts and laws were usually written in Latin.

At this epoch there were four local varieties of English: Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, and West Saxon. The first of these early Old English Dialects. developed into a literary dialect, but with Scandinavian. the coming of the Danes quickly sank again and was replaced by West Saxon, in which form nearly all Old English literature has descended to us. From the middle of the eighth century the Danish invasions increased in violence, and some of the invaders came to settle. By the year 1000 they inhabited half the country and dominated all of it, and from that time Scandinavian exerted an immense influence over English. That the words *are, they,* and *them,* which are among the most necessary terms in speech, displaced their Saxon cognates *sind, bēoð, hie,* and *hem,* is a proof that the two languages became practically one. It is probable that the extent of the Scandinavian influence is not fully realized even yet, owing to the fact that a

very large number of forms in the two tongues coincided with one another. The amalgamation, however, was only commenced in this period. The disturbance of the Conquest and the pressure of the Normans were needed to unite the two oppressed languages and races. Danish, English, and Norman-French all at the same time combined to produce the Middle English of the period that commenced about 1150, which differed as much from its predecessor as the English of the present day has diverged from that of Chaucer.

For a century and a half after the Norman Conquest English was a submerged language, joining the speech of the Danish part of the nation as the despised tongue of serfs. It was very nearly destroyed by the shock, and when it emerged again it had changed in structure, and its vocabulary had become an intimate mixture of Norman-French, Saxon, and Scandinavian words. Norman-French remained the language of the court, the upper classes and the law courts, lingering on in the form of Law-French until the eighteenth century. Proclamations and edicts were issued sometimes in it, and sometimes in Latin. Its shape in the thirteenth century may be illustrated by the following passage from the Provisions of Oxford (1258).

Ceo jura le chanceler de Engletere. ke il ne enselera nul bref fors bref de curs sanz le commandement le rei e de sun conseil ke serra present. . . . Ne ke il ne prendra nul loer autrement ke

ıl nest dıvise as autres. E lem baudra li un companiun en la furme ke le cunseıl purverra.[1]

It is to be remarked that it was thought advisable to issue the proclamation of Henry III's adherence to the Provisions in English as well as in Latin and French. This, as far as is known, was the first proclamation to be issued in the vernacular since the Conquest, and its appearance may be taken as a sure sign that English was becoming again the usual mode of intercourse between the rulers of the country and the common people, as well as that the natives of the soil had again attained political importance. The proclamation is a good specimen of early Middle English. The following is an extract from it :

The Revival of English.

Henr' þurȝ Godes fultome King on Engleneloande, Lhoauerd on Yrloand', Duk on Norm' on Aquitain' and Eorl on Anıow, send igretinge to alle hise holde ılaerde and ıleawede on Huntendon' schır'. þæt witen ȝe wel alle þæt we willen and unnen þæt. þæt ure rædesmen alle oþer þe moare dæl of heom þæt beoþ ıchosen þurȝ us and þurȝ þæt loandes folk on ure kunerıche. habbeþ idon and schullen don in þe worþnesse of Gode and on ure treowþe· for þe freme of þe loande. þurȝ þe besıȝte of þæn toforeniseıde redesmen ; beo stedefæst and ılestınde ın all þinge abuten ænde and we hoaten alle ure treowe ın þe treowþe. þæt heo us oȝen

[1] *Translation.*—This the Chancellor of England swore. That he will not seal any writ, except a writ of course, without the order of the King, and of (such of) his Counçıl as shall be present . . . and that he will not take any payment except as is provided for others and (that) he shall be allotted a colleague in the form that the council shall provide.—STUBBS, *Select Charters.*

þæt heo stedefæstliche healden and swerien to healden and to
werien þo isetnesses þæt beon imakede and beon to makien þurȝ
pæn toforeniseide rædesmen oþer þurȝ þe moare dæl of heom
alswo alse hit is biforen iseid. and þæt æhc oþer helpe þæt for
to done bi þan iliche oþe aȝenes alle men. riȝt for to done and to
foangen. and noan ne nime of loande ne of eȝte. wherþurȝ
þis besigte muȝe beon ilet oþer iwersed on onie wise. and ȝif oni
oþer onie cumen her onȝenes · we willen and hoaten þæt alle ure
treowe heom healden deadliche ifoan. and for þæt we willen þæt
þis beo stedefæst and lestinde , we senden ȝew þis writ open iseined
wiþ ure seel. to halden a manges ȝew inehord. witnesse us seluen
æt Lunden : þane Eȝtetenþe day. on þe monþe of Octobr'. In
þe Two and fowertiȝþe ȝeare of ure cruninge . . . [1]

[1] *Translation.*— Henry, by the grace of God king of England,
lord of Ireland, duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and count of
Anjou, to all his faithful, clerk and lay, in Huntingdonshire, greet-
ing. know ye all well that we will and grant that that which our
counsellors, all or the greater part of them, that be chosen by us
and by the people of the land of our kingdom, have done and
shall do in honour of God and in loyalty to us, for the benefit of
the country, by the provision of the aforesaid counsellors, be
steadfast and lasting in all things without end. and we com-
mand all our true men in the troth that they owe us, that they
steadfastly hold and swear to hold and to defend the statutes
that be made or to be made by the aforesaid counsellors or by the
greater part of them as is aforesaid ; and that each help other
that for to do by the same oath, against all men, right for to do
and to receive ; and let no one take of land or of goods, whereby
this provision may be hindered or damaged in any wise. and if
any person or persons come there against, we will and command
that all our faithful hold them as deadly foes. and for that we
will that this be steadfast and lasting, we send you this writ open,
sealed with our seal, to keep among you in store. witness our-
self at London, the 18th of October, in the forty-second year of
our reign. . . .—STUBBS, *Select Charters.*

The four dialects of Old English were soon replaced by new forms which differed from them in

many particulars. There were now three main local dialects, spoken in the North, the Midlands, and the South. The Midland dialect contained two varieties, West Midland, which resembled Northern, and East Midland, which had strong affinities with Southern. The last was the speech of the most populous and most cultured portion of the country; it was the dialect of London and of Chaucer, and it exerted more influence than the other dialects. It spread until it became the standard speech, and the ancestor of Modern English. The following passage from Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (*c.* 1385) shows East Midland at its best:

While þat I, stille, record*ede* these thyng*es* with myself, and merk*id* my weply compleynte with office of poyntel; I sawe, stondyng*e* abouen the heighte of myn heued a womman of ful greet reuerence by semblaunt, h*ir* ei*en* brennyng*e* and cleer seyng*e* ouer the comune myght of men, with a lifly colour and with swich vigour and strength*e* þat it ne myghte nat be*n* empt*id* ; al were it so þat sche was ful of so greet age that m*en* ne wold*en* not trow*en* in no maner*e* þat she were of our elde   The stature of hir*e* was of a doutous jugement, for somtyme she constreyn*ed* and schronk hir-selu*en* lik to the comune mesure of men, and somtyme it sem*ede* at she touch*ede* hevene wyth the heighte of h*yr* heued ; and whan sche hef h*ir* heued hey*ere*, sche perc*ede* the selve hevene, so þat the sighte of men lokyng*e* was in ydel. Hir cloth*es* wer*en* mak*id* of right delye thred*es* and subtile craft, of perdurable matere ; the whiche cloth*es* sche had*de*

wou*en* with hir owe*ne* hand*es* as I knewe wel aftir by hirselfe
declarynge and schewynge to me the beaute   The whiche cloth*es*
a derknesse of a forlet*en* and a despis*ed* elde had*de* dusk*ıd* and dirk*ed*
as it ıs wont to dırken besmok*ede* ymag*es*   In the nethere*ste* hem
or bordure of thise cloth*es* men redd*en* ywou*en* in a Grekıssch P ;
þat sygnifi*eth* the lıf actıf, and abouen þat lettre ın the heı*este*
bordure a Grekıssch T, þat sıgnıfi*eth* the lıf contemplatıf.
And by-twıx*en* thıse two lettr*es* ther wer*e* sey*n* degr*ees* nobly
ywrough*t* in maner*e* of laddr*es*, by whiche degr*ees* m*en* myht*en*
clymb*en* fro the nethere*ste* lettre to the uppere*ste*.   Natheles
hand*es* of some me̊n had*den* korve þat cloth by vıolence and by
strength*e* and everıce man of hem had*de* bor*en* awey swıche pec*es*
as he mygh*te* get*en*   And forsothe thıs forseıd*e* womman bar
smal*e* bok*ıs* ın h*ı*r rıght hand, and ın h*ı*r left hand sche bar a ceptre.

For the sake of comparison a modern translation
of the same passage in the Latin original is here
inserted.

" While I was pondering this in silence, and
using my pen to set down so tearful a complaint,
there appeared standing over my head a woman's
form whose countenance was full of majesty, whose
eyes shone with fire and in power of insight sur-
passed the eyes of men, whose colour was full of
life, whose strength was yet intact though she was
so full of years that none would ever think that she
was subject to such age as ours.   One could but
doubt her varying stature, for at one moment she
repressed it to the common measure of a man, at
another she seemed to touch with her crown the
very heavens : and when she had raised higher her
head, it pierced even the sky and baffled the sight

of those who would look upon it. Her clothing
was wrought of the finest thread by subtle work-
manship brought to an indivisible piece. This had
she woven with her own hands, as I afterwards did
learn of her own shewing. Their beauty was
somewhat dimmed by the dulness of long neglect,
as is seen in the smoke-grimed masks of our ancestors.
On the border below was inwoven the symbol π,
on that above was to be read a θ and between the
two letters there could be marked degrees, by
which, as by the rungs of a ladder, ascent might be
made from the lower principle to the higher. Yet
the hands of rough men had torn this garment and
snatched such morsels as they could therefrom.
In her right hand she carried books, in her left
was a sceptre brandished." [1]

It will be observed that East Midland, as repre-
sented by the first of these passages, differs from
West Saxon, the old literary dialect, in
Differences between Old, Middle, and Modern English. addition to possessing a different set of
inflexions, in the following respects :

(1) It contains more Latin words, such
as *recordede*, *office*.

(2) Words showing strong French influence, such
as *bordure*, *semblaunt*, *beaute*, *poyntel*, are frequent.

(3) The full inflexions of Old English have been
greatly weakened : the vowel of the inflexions

[1] Boethius, *The Consolations of Philosophy*, trans. W. V. Cooper,
1904, pp. 2, 3.

is always -ǝ, and the inflexions are fewer in number.

(4) The style is more fluent, and with the decay of the synthetic structure of the words the normal word-order is beginning to strengthen itself.

A comparison of the modern translation of the passage of Boethius given above with Chaucer's rendering exhibits something of the manner in which the language has changed. While Chaucer used 334 words, the modern translator used only 273 words to express the same matter. Moreover, this difference is much greater than it appears, for in the Chaucerian passages there are nearly 530 syllables,[1] as against 340 in the modern passage. There are at least 80 inflexions in the Middle English passage, and 50 in the Modern.

At this time Latin was the language of professional intercourse in Western Europe, the vernaculars being regarded as only fit for the **Latin Influence.** baser purposes of life, and for the conversation of the unlearned. A belief appears to have existed that they would perish at no distant date, and that Latin would become the universal medium of communication. Naturally, in these circumstances, a large number of words passed from Latin into English. The Latin of the

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[1] It is not possible to state the exact number of syllables, as it is probable that one or two of the commonest words, such as *were* and *are*, had already lost the final sound.

Dark and Middle Ages, however, was not the classical Latin of Cæsar, Cicero, and Virgil, but existed in two forms each of which possessed a less exact structure, and a vocabulary partly derived from the vernaculars which flourished by their side. The first, the so-called Popular Latin of the Roman provincials, was spoken from at least the first century before Christ. This was the stage precedent to the formation of Italian, French and Spanish. Apparently, it perished in Britain on the arrival of the, Saxons. The other was used by the mediæval clergy, who formed the whole of the professional class, and through them had everywhere great influence upon ordinary speech. From both these forms a great many words have flowed into English, from Popular Latin mainly through French, from Mediæval Latin by direct borrowing. To these two a third form added its influence at the Renaissance, when the study of classical Latin and of Greek revived. Since that time Latin has ceased to be spoken, and most of the numerous loan-words which have entered from it and from Greek into English have retained their original written form, at any rate in their stems.   •

Throughout this whole period French exerted more influence than any other living tongue, so that most foreign loans, of whatever ultimate origin (except those drawn directly from Mediæval Latin),

passed through it on their way into English. The
Crusades, however, brought to these shores not a
few exotic words, and, as the Latin scholars
of the age went to the Arabs for much of
their learning, some Arabic terms also
appeared. The Arabs in their turn,
having borrowed much of their knowledge from the
Greeks of Alexandria, formed an intermediate por-
tion of another channel which connects English
with Greek. Though Greek appears to have been
unknown in England, a constant stream of words of
Greek origin was constantly flowing into English.

The first effect of printing, which was introduced
into England about 1475, was, by spreading the
habit of reading, to assist the growth of the standard
language. As the power to read and write became
more general, the rate at which the sounds changed
must have been retarded, for there can be no doubt
that a phonetic spelling will act as a brake to speech.
The spelling remained almost free for a hundred
and fifty years after printing began in England,
and even after that time orthography was adapted
to pronunciation in a few words whose sound had
changed greatly. When the spelling became stereo-
typed, so that authors could no longer alter it,
this did not entirely stop sound-change, and in
course of time the pronunciation developed so far
that it lost all relation with the spelling.

The Renaissance, while in the main a rebirth of

classical learning, brought with it a great admiration for Italian thought and Italian literature.   Soon after the commencement of the sixteenth century Italian words began to come into English.   After the Reformation, the thoughts of Englishmen were incessantly turned to the Netherlands, where the struggle between the old and new religions was then fiercest, and numbers of Englishmen went abroad to fight in the Low Countries against the Spaniard.   At the same time the maritime importance of the Dutch caused a great many Dutch nautical terms and other Dutch words to be borrowed by English.   The opening of the whole world to commerce, and the buccaneering expeditions of the Elizabethans, started that importation of words from all quarters of the globe which has gone on ever since.   At first, Spanish and Portuguese exerted the strongest influence, but words of all sorts began to appear.

Expansion since 1500.

In the year 1500 English was almost confined to the part of Great Britain which lies south of the River Forth.   The commencement of colonization carried it abroad, first to North America, and in the eighteenth century to India, Australia, and South Africa, and redoubled the force of the various currents that were playing upon the parent speech.   The increasing commerce and travel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have helped to standardize the tongue, and to increase the vocabu-

lary from innumerable sources.   Advancing civiliza-
tion has swelled the number of meanings attaching
to many words, and has greatly enlarged the number
of abstract terms.   The Industrial Revolution of
the latter end of the eighteenth century produced
a great crop of new terms denoting industrial pro-
cesses and products, and the Scientific Revolution
of the nineteenth century has had a similar result
in another sphere.

These, then, are, in briefest outline, the causes
from which, and the steps by which, English has
grown from an obscure dialect, confined to a small
district, spoken by a small number of persons, with
a full system of inflexions and a vocabulary scarcely
touched by foreign influences, to its present opu-
lence of words, simple grammatical structure, and
wide geographical distribution.

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH is the most widely spread of all languages. It is the native speech of nearly all of the fifty million people who dwell in the British Isles, of Australians and most Canadians, of a large part of the men and women who live in South Africa, and of the majority of the hundred million citizens of the United States. It is the second language of several million Hindus and Egyptians. In most parts of the world it is the language of trade. From London, over the ocean to the remote isles of the Pacific, to the lonely Australian bush, across the continent of North America, it has established a community of word and of thought. Nationality depends upon language to an incalculable degree, and the possession of a common language is the strongest link in the chains that bind the scattered peoples of the British Empire and the heterogeneous population of the United States.

Wide Diffusion of English.

In addition to the local and unimportant peculiarities to be found in the British Isles, many different dialects must be springing up in other

parts of the world. Education and travel, however, tend to level these, and the improved means of communication that wireless telephony

Suppression of Dialects. is rapidly placing in our hands may have the same effect. It is perhaps fanciful to speculate on the future of wireless communication. But one may be permitted to imagine a time not far distant when every house will constantly hear the purest speech of this island. English has spread more quickly than any other tongue. It may be that there will be no need to decode or translate in broadcasting speeches and news, and that the whole world will listen to one great central source. In that case one language will have to be chosen as the medium, and, as English is better known than any other tongue, it is most likely that it will be used for this purpose. Even without considering the possibilities suggested by wireless communication, the likelihood of English becoming a universal tongue for the globe is not remote.[1]

[1] The difference between the dispersion of English in the early eighteenth century and now is illustrated by the statement made on November 5, 1924, by the Chairman of Messrs. Longmans that in the preceding five years more copies of *Robinson Crusoe* were sold in India alone than in England during the first five years after its publication. Even as far back as the beginning of the seventeenth century the possibility of English becoming the universal language, or the basis of a universal language, had occurred to men's minds. Writing in 1619 Alexander Gil (in the preface to his *Logonomia Anglica*) said: "And since once the

The English language has a very large vocabulary. In the *New English Dictionary* are contained about 400,000 words, but these are all the words that are found in English at all times, and are far more than have been in use at any one time. *The Concise English Dictionary* professes to contain all the words in current use, excluding all strictly technical terms. It contains 47,000 words, not reckoning compounds, which are very numerous.

Size of the Vocabulary.

Some rather absurd and incorrect statements have been made concerning the size of the vocabularies of different persons and classes, and it has been argued that the number of different terms that a man uses is an accurate measure of his intelligence. Shakespeare used about 21,000 words, while Milton's poems contain only 8,000 words, and it has been concluded from this that Shakespeare was a man with a wider range of ideas than Milton. But extent of vocabulary is largely deter-

whole earth had one written and spoken language, it is surely much to be desired that by the mere expedient of sharing words one language should become common to all nations. If to do this were within human capacity, assuredly no tongue could be found more suitable for the purpose than the English tongue."

(*Et quum semel omnis terrae labium unum fuerit, et unus sermo : optandum sane esset, ut una vocum communione, unus omnium gentium sermo communis fieret. Quod si humanis viribus conandum esset, nulla profecto lingua ad hoc magis commoda quam lingua Anglica inveniretur*)

mined by the nature of the literature produced. That Shakespeare's plays dealt with a much wider range of life than Milton's poems is the cause of their containing more terms. This is easily proved by the fact that Milton's prose works contain a larger vocabulary than his poems. It is often said, too, that a farm labourer uses only about 300 different words, this being a repetition of a statement made by Max Muller. It would be easily disproved by listening to a farm labourer and counting the words used. A little boy of 6 was found to have used 2,688 different terms since his birth. The dictionaries of some savage languages contain many thousands of words. There were more than 20,000 words in the literary vocabulary of Old English.

We all have three vocabularies : the number of words whose meaning we know, which is the largest ; the number of words that we use in speech, which is much smaller ; and the number of words we use in writing, which, in the case of habitual or professional writers, is between the two. The ordinary educated Englishman probably understands about 50,000 words. No doubt, the extent of a writer's vocabulary affords some measure of his skill and practice as a writer ; but only in relation to other writers upon similar subjects.

When all has been said, however, power of self-expression in speech seems to be a very good index of intellectual ability. People of all classes

habitually assess one another by this means, although some fluent persons have little behind their words, and some halting tongues conceal unsuspected talents. Whatever ground there may be for the common opinion, the power to speak well is of great importance, since the influence and authority that each man wields over his fellows are largely dependent upon it. For the clerk, the artisan, and the technical expert, as well as for the professional man, lawyer, doctor, teacher, and minister of religion, it has a high money value. Knowledge of the subject-matter and technique of a calling is not in itself sufficient to enable its possessor to earn the living to acquire the skill for which he laboured in workshop, school, or university. To obtain this skill he must have a due understanding of his native language so that he may comprehend what he is taught ; and to secure the opportunity to use it he often needs to be able to speak well.

The Value of Good Speech.

A good speaker, besides choosing appropriate terms from a wide vocabulary, and besides being able to utter his thoughts with fluency, uses correct sounds, enunciates clearly, and employs proper intonation.

This definition of good speech appears to be a truism : but directly we begin to examine it we find that it bristles with difficulties, especially in the direction of pronunciation, with which quality this chapter is almost

Standard English.

exclusively concerned. There is no accepted definition of Standard English. Is it the pronunciation of the best speakers, the upper classes and the best educated, or is it the speech of the majority ? The sounds of which our words are composed, and the ordinary vocabulary, differ slightly in different parts of the country. There are about forty sounds in Southern English as it is spoken by the educated, and about fifty additional sounds which are local variations of these are to be heard in different parts of England. Also, the language is always changing. Moreover, each individual has his peculiarities of speech, residing principally in his intonation, but partly in the quality of his vowels and consonants, and it would be as undesirable as it is impossible to eliminate all personal differences, and to produce a dead uniformity of speech among all the members of the community.

Around this subject many superstitions lurk. It appears to be a common assumption that the language of the upper classes is the ideal of good English. But even Standard English, defined in this sense, is not wholly free from linguistic defects, and it is not entirely reverend in its history. Many dialectal peculiarities have as respectable and ancient a history as any part of the speech of the upper classes, or of the majority of the nation. The Somersetshire *we be* is older than the standard

we are, for *are* is a Danish importation which displaced the Saxon ancestor of *be*. It is common to hear Cockney stigmatized as ugly, and some other local dialects praised for their quaintnesses. Yet in itself the *aï* in the Cockney pronunciation of *late* is as comely a sound as the vowel used for that word by any other class. The same vowel is not disliked when it is heard in the standard pronunciation of *light*. The *v* in the Cockney pronunciation of *father* is a common sound in the legitimate pronunciation of many standard words.

The desire for a standard form of speech has solid reasons behind it. But these likes and dislikes are in truth prejudices, often social in origin. So far as they are social they are irrelevant. Pride in one's native tongue should be a national feeling, not a social feeling ; it should be based upon linguistic criteria and upon no others. The linguistic criteria are not hard to find : they are range of vocabulary, exact application of terms, variety of sentence-form, modulation of voice, clearness of utterance, and the possession of sharp distinction in the words used. Habitual use of an inferior or restricted vocabulary, indefiniteness of meaning, monotony of intonation, meanness of sentence-structure, slurring of vowels and consonants—these are the marks of bad English, no matter what class displays them.

We need a linguistic ideal, but we have none.

We allow ourselves to judge of good and bad in speech by reference to social differences. Our distaste for the *aĭ* and other peculiarities of Cockney arises from the feeling that they are associated with a mean life, a thin purse and a narrow mind. Hence differences of locution continue to divide class from class. Till we have framed an ideal of spoken English that is derived from linguistic considerations alone, the language can never be purged of local and social variations. Though it may be readily conceded that the speech of the upper classes is freer from defects than any other form, from lack of such an ideal its formal aim is not at real linguistic virtues : it aims at expressing by its form a class distinction. The linguistic virtues which it exhibits are, as it were, accidental. And other varieties of English aim, formally, at nothing at all. No formal linguistic virtues are required of any of them.

It might be argued that standard spoken English is that form which corresponds to the written language. But this line of thought does not lead to a solution of the problem. There is no variety of spoken English which corresponds very closely to the written language, for language as written is to no small degree artificial. An intenser life than it possesses is found in speech, which is relatively artless and spontaneous. Though age by age it differs

Differences between Written and Spoken English.

from its partner in varying degrees, and though it
contains many words which are never used in speech,
and constructions more complicated than the most
studied utterances of the most practised orators,
the vocabulary and structure of the written language
are based upon speech. That written language is
a permanent record, while spoken words are fleeting
sounds, extinguished in a moment, and leaving
no obvious traces, has favoured the notion that
writing is more real and potent than speech. But
it is not so.

. . . . .

The sounds of speech are produced by breath
issuing from the lungs, passing through the larynx,
and issuing at the mouth and nose, or at
The Organic
Basis of   the mouth alone. As the breath passes
Speech.
through the larynx, the vocal chords,
which are ligaments at the sides of the larynx, are
vibrated. If the vibration is very small a whisper
results ; if the vibration is moderate the sound is
said to be unvoiced, although in reality it is given
a moderate degree of voice ; if the strength of the
vibration is at its full, the sound is said to be voiced.
The variations of the voice, and the adjustments of
the parts which are brought into play, occur with
extreme rapidity, and so produce the complicated
articulations of continuous sound with which we
are familiar in speech. The relative loudness of

the sounds depends upon the force with which the breath is driven from the lungs, and upon its volume.[1]

When the breath passes out unobstructed a vowel-sound results. When it is any way obstructed a consonant sound is produced. The passage may be narrowed so that the breath is squeezed, as in the sounds associated with *f*, *v*, *m*, *s*, *r*, *th*, *l*, and others ; or it may be momentarily closed by some part of the mouth apparatus, as in *g*, *k*, *b*, *p*, *t*, and *d*.

The following is a table of English sounds, the
Table of
English
Sounds.
symbols employed being those of The International Phonetic Association, applied as simply as possible.

CONSONANTS

p	as in pen [pen]	v	as in vice [vaɪs]
b	,, bat [bæt]	s	,, sun [sʌn]
t	,, tap [tæp]	z	,, zone [zoːn]
d	,, dot [dɔt]	w	,, wɪt [wɪt]
k	,, keep [kiːp]	ŋ	,, long [loŋ]
g	,, give [giv]	θ	,, thɪn [θɪn]
m	,, man [mæn]	ð	,, then [ðen]
n	,, now [naŭ]	ʃ	,, shall [ʃæl]
l	,, let [let]	ʒ	,, pleasure [pléʒə]
r	,, run [rʌn]	j	,, you [juː]
f	,, fit [fit]		

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[1] A complete and scientific account of English sounds cannot be attempted here. For information beyond that which is contained in the slight introductory sketch given in this chapter the reader is referred to any standard textbook on Phonetics.

VOWELS

ı   as in hıt [hıt]   ə as in above [ə'bʌv]
ı: „   seen [sı n]   ə·   „   her [hə]
e   „   get [get]   eĭ   „   day [deĭ]
æ   „   hat [hæt]   aĭ   „   fly [flaĭ]
æ   „   there [θæ̃ ə]   aŭ   „   how [haŭ]
a   „   father [fá.ðə]   ɔĭ   „   coil [kɔĭl]
ɔ   „   got [gɔt]   h, which is never found except
o: „   law [lɔ.]   at the beginning of a syllable,
o   „   omit [omıt]   is made by the use of additional
o: „   stone [sto:n]   force in expelling the breath
u   „   put [put]   used for the production of any
u·   „   cool [ku l]   of the preceding vowel-sounds.
ʌ   „   cut [kʌt]

Notes.—(1) It will be seen that besides *h* there are in all forty elementary sounds in Modern English, twenty-one consonants and nineteen vowels. Phoneticians generally discern several more, and there are numerous local sounds, such as *x*, found in the Scotch lo*ch*. (2) The sounds *eĭ*, *aĭ*, *aŭ*, and *ɔĭ*, being theoretically resolvable into $e + i$, $a + i$, $a + u$, and $ɔ + ı$, are called diphthongs : they are not actually resolvable, any more than the colour green can be separated into its yellow and blue components. (3) When unaccented all the vowels tend to become *ə*.
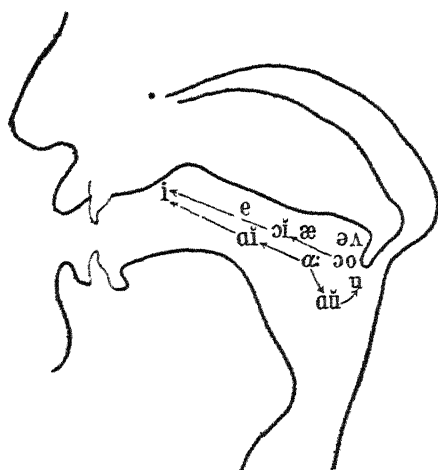
The following diagrams exhibit roughly the parts of the mouth and nose apparatus involved in making each sound :

Formation of Sounds.

[1] This sound is frequently explained as *oŭ*.
[2] This sound is sometimes explained as *e:*.

4

Of the consonants *t*, *d*, *p*, *b*, *w*, *j*, *g*, *k*, *x* are stops, and *n*, *ŋ*, *l*, *r*, *s*, *z*, *θ*, *ð*, *ʃ*, *ʒ*, *m*, *f*, and *v* are continuants. The nasal channel is utilized for the passage of part of the breath in *m*, *n*, and *ŋ*. *t* is made by stopping the breath by pressing the tip of the tongue against the root of the upper teeth. The addition of more voice
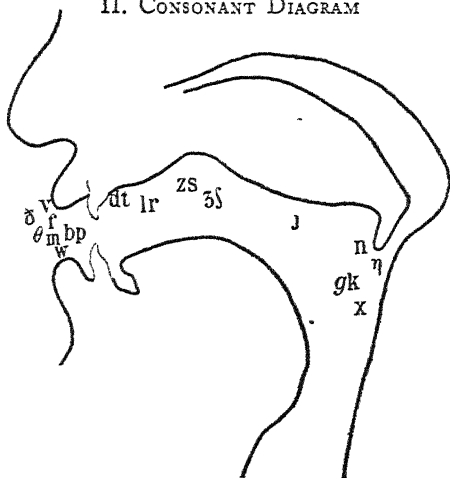
I. VOWEL DIAGRAM

produces *d*. If the breath is allowed to slide while the mouth-apparatus is in the *t*-position *θ* results, and *ð* corresponds in the same way to *d*. *f* is made by setting the lower lip against the upper teeth and allowing breath to pass: *v* is the voiced form. *w* is made by rounding the lips and voicing the issuing breath. *l* is the result of voiced breath

sliding along the sides of the tongue when that is pressed against the hard palate. If the tip of the tongue is placed against the hard palate and allowed to vibrate quickly, *s* is made, and *z* is made by the addition of more voice: if the vibration is larger and slower, *r* is the sound produced. *g* and *k* are made by stopping the voiced breath just as

II. Consonant Diagram

it leaves the throat. *ʃ* and *ʒ* are made in a somewhat similar manner to *s* and *z*, but further back and with a broader tongue. *j* is made in the back of the mouth, and *x* in the throat.

Modern English has a strong accent. This explains why all English vowels when unaccented tend to be obscured and to change into *ə* or *i*; for the inevitable effect of a strong

Accent.

accent is to preserve the accented syllable at the expense of the others. The tendency is incomplete, and its nature may best be gathered by examining a few examples, such as *famous* ('feiməs), *better* ('betə), *German* ('dʒə mən), *special* ('speʃəl or speʃl), *equal* ('iːkwəl), *awkward* ('ɔ.kwəd), and by such pairs as *telegraph* ('teligræf) and *telegraphy* (te'legrəfi), where the vowel of the second syllable changes to i when it does not carry the accent, while the vowel of the third syllable is weakened from *æ* to *ə* when the next syllable to it is accented.

On the whole, the accent comes as far as possible towards the beginning of the word : thus the eighteenth-century *bal'cony* (bal'kɔni) has become 'bɔlkəni, *labóratory* (læbɔrətəri) has become 'læbərət(ə)ri, and the Chaucerian *com'fort* is now *'comfort* ('kʌmfət). In general, to the third syllable from the end is as far as the accent can be drawn, as in *'family* and *fam'iliar* and *equaliz'ation* (ˌiːkwəl-aiˈzeiʃən) compared with équalise ('iˑkwəlaiz). In *láboratory* it is five syllables from the end, but such a word is awkward to pronounce.

The foregoing description of the vowels and consonants shows that the extremest difference

between written and spoken English is found in the sounds and the spelling which purports to represent them. Even at their best, visible symbols are an imperfect means of representing sounds, and Eng-

lish spelling is now almost as bad as it can be ; from various causes it has become so inconsistent and irrational that, as regards the sound of words, we may almost be said to speak one language and to write another. After we have become familiar with the spelling system, its effect upon us is such that we are unable, without special training, to ascertain the actual sounds of the words we use. The modern English ear is spoilt by modern English spelling. But this is not a natural or inevitable condition.[1]

The deficiencies of the alphabet and the imperfections of the way in which it is used are of several kinds. Most sounds are represented in spelling in more than one way ; most of the characters are employed to indicate more than one sound ; there are sounds to which no character belongs ; there are characters which represent no simple sound ; in some words there are silent letters ; in others there are sounds which are not represented. A perfect phonetic alphabet would contain a symbol for each sound, and for each sound there would

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[1] In his pamphlet on *English Homophones*, Dr. Bridges remarks (p. 31, n.) : " This is a very common condition. The habitual pronunciation is associated in the mind with the familiar eye-picture of the literary printed spelling so closely that it is difficult for the speaker to believe that he is not uttering the written sounds : but he is not competent to judge his own speech. . . . I was shocked when I first discovered my own delusions in such matters."

be only one symbol; and in order that the
pronunciation should be adequately indicated, the
accented syllable in each word would be marked.

The confusion due to our spelling, which has
lessened the sensitivity of our hearing, and has made
us think that we pronounce words more as they are
spelt than we actually do, has had the further effect
of setting free our speech to develop on its own lines
of pronunciation rather than of attracting pronun-
ciation to the spelling.   Owing to the absence of
any rational relation between the visual signs and
the sounds, Modern English has broken loose.   It
has dragged its anchor and is drifting along a cur-
rent whose speed and direction are unknown.   The
pronunciation is almost as immune from the influ-
ence of the written language as a tongue would be
which had no literature, and no system of writing.
A really significant system of orthography would
exert a steadying and conservative effect upon the
whole speech.

True, the spelling of some words has affected the
pronunciation.   The *l* of *fault* is a later insertion, as
can be seen in:

> Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught
> The love he bore to learning was in fault.
>   GOLDSMITH . *The Deserted Village.*

On the other hand, *victuals* and *scent* are examples
of the more numerous class of words whose un-
phonetic spelling has failed to affect the pronuncia-

tion.[1]   Other words of this class are *doubt, debt, indict,* and *scythe*.   That the felt connexion between the spelling and the pronunciation of English words has been weak for centuries is amply illustrated by the history of the word *one*.   Of this word the *New English Dictionary* says : " By the fifteenth century *oon* had developed in Southern and South-Western an initial *w* which only occasionally appears in the spelling but is now the standard pronunciation." It is found about 1420 for the first time.   The pronunciation with an initial *w* had become universal by 1700, but the corresponding spelling had already disappeared, and has never since been used.

These are only extreme instances of a discrepancy between sound and visual symbol which is now the general rule in our words.   The written forms of English words, which were started on their careers as phonograms, that is, with the intention

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[1] *Scent* is derived from the Latin *sentire* , its first recorded use in literature is in a work composed about 1375, when it was spelt *sent* ; the latest recorded example of this spelling is in 1667.   The first known use of the spelling *scent*, which was apparently due to a mistaken notion that *scent* is derived from *scientia*, occurs in 1620. *Victuals* appeared in English not later than the beginning of the thirteenth century, and was spelt *vytayle, vitaille,* etc.   In 1723 Swift used *vittles*, which still survives, as an intentional colloquial spelling of the ordinary pronunciation.   The spelling *victuayle* is found about 1523, and *victuals* gradually displaced the more phonetic form.   This spelling was made from *victum*, from *vivo*, but the word itself was borrowed from French.

of representing the corresponding sounds immediately, have gradually lost that character. From being phonograms they have become diagrams which suggest the corresponding ideas immediately, and the connexion with the sounds of the words has become mediate. Ostensibly phonographic, they are in actual fact ideograms. It is possible that this change of principle is an improvement : whether that is so or not, the form which it has taken has grave disadvantages.

As all consistency has now departed from English spelling, it would be necessary, in order to account for it with certainty, to trace the history of many words. There remain in it, however, vestiges of general principles which, when elucidated, furnish an explanation for the spelling of most. After their arrival in this country, the Saxons and Jutes, who originally employed runes, took over the Roman alphabet from the native inhabitants. To it they added three of their own runes, of which one, *thorn* (Þ), still survives in the *y* of the pseudo-archaic *ye* for *the*. Old English spelling, it is likely, was a moderately accurate indication of the pronunciation.

History of English Spelling

Concurrently with the great change in the language caused by the advent of the Normans, the spelling was altered. If the old system of spelling had been employed for marking the altered pronunciation, all would have been well. But the

French scribes introduced some symbols of their own, and also applied the old alphabet in their own manner, which was different from the Old English manner. The vowels *a*, *e* and *o* were doubled to indicate length, the mark of the long vowels employed in Old English was disused, *j*, *q*, and *v* were added to the alphabet and *u* and *h* were sometimes introduced after a " hard " *g*, as in *gest, guest* ; *gastlic, ghostly*. The French system was incompletely applied, so that from this time consistency was lost.

Between 1400 and 1500 the final *e* which characterized so many Middle English words ceased to be pronounced. Where it occurred after a consonant preceded by a short vowel, it was generally dropped ; where it succeeded a consonant preceded by a long vowel, it was retained as a sign of vowellength, so that there were now two means of marking this feature. Hence the Old English *gōd* is now spelt *good* (the vowel has shortened and changed in more recent times), while the Chaucerian *stoon* has been replaced by *stone*. On the other hand, a very large number of consonants following a short vowel were doubled.

Up to this time the spelling of a word could be changed at the will of the writer when the pronunciation altered, and so the system of orthography had kept touch with the sounds of words, and had preserved a certain degree of fluidity. With the introduction of printing it began to con-

geal, and by about 1660 had been practically fixed in its present form. Also, during the Renaissance, a notion prevailed amongst the learned that the proper function of spelling was to indicate the origin of a word rather than its pronunciation, and this unfortunate idea was applied to large numbers of words, such as *sent* and *vitailles*, thereby increasing the confusion still further.

The condition of English spelling at the moment when it was just beginning to lose its freedom may be seen from the following extract from the first folio edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1623) :

> To be, or not to be, that is the Question :
> Whether 'tis nobler in the minde to suffer
> The slings and arrowes of outragious Fortune,
> Or to take armes against a Sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them · to dye, to sleepe,
> No more ; and by a sleepe to say we ende
> The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall shockes
> That Flesh is heyre too ? 'Tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wish'd.   To dye, to sleepe,
> To sleep, perchance to Dreame ; I, there's the rub,
> For in that sleepe of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffel'd off this mortall coile,
> Must give us pawse

The spelling had sufficient energy to shake off many of the numerous final *e*'s that in the fifteenth century had still retained a phonetic value, but apart from that has changed very little from Shakespeare's day till the present time.

Since then the pronunciation has been completely transformed. As a result, our spelling has been out of date for two centuries and a half, and even at that distant epoch it was an irregular combination of three systems. The final consequence is that it is useless for the purpose for which it was devised. Under a properly phonetic system, as the spelling would indicate the pronunciation of all words, everyone acquainted with it would be able to pronounce every word at sight, and to write every word at sound. No one can do this under the system, or rather lack of system, now prevailing. Everyone is forced to learn, by imitation or by reference to a pronouncing dictionary, the pronunciation of a word new to him, while no one can be certain of the spelling of any word that he hears for the first time.

The commonest and shortest words are the most inconsistent in spelling, and it is sometimes said that with the exception of them English spelling is on the whole consistent. It is true that many recent words of Latin and Greek origin follow a settled system, but even among newer formations inconsistency is found. Contrast, for example, stereotype and mineowner, limelight and limerick, spheroidal and heroical, mileage and lineage.

One of the evil effects of the discrepancy between the spelling and the pronunciation is that the labour of learning to read by means of the

alphabet has been raised to a maximum. It wastes the time of teacher and taught. The English child is obliged to learn to recognize an immense number of word-symbols which, while pretending to be rational combinations of signs representing sounds, seem to him arbitrary complexes having a purely accidental association with the corresponding sound-combinations, as they must seem to anyone not learned in the history of spelling. By the methods ordinarily employed he starts from vowels and consonants properly associated with signs; but as, whatever system of teaching is employed, the number of exceptions soon outstrips the regular examples, he is ultimately forced to rely upon memory alone. Lastly, when by its sole aid he has mastered this task, he has to switch from the method of reading phonographically to the method of reading ideographically; for this latter is employed by all practised readers in all languages, since no one could read with a useful degree of speed by deciphering each phonetic symbol, even if the script were perfectly consistent.

The Labour involved in Learning to Read

Another effect of the discrepancy is that it is uneducative in a deep sense. Much of the little child's environment is an ordered world, but when he goes to school he is confronted by a system which is a miracle of contorted inconsistency, and which no effort can reduce to law. The school

is forced to present to him a chaos. He is baffled at every turn : what he learns one day is contradicted the next. He never knows when a new value will appear to mar his half-formed impressions. His growing reason, instead of being exercised, gets no practice ; he acquires the bad habit of not relying upon it, he becomes diffident where he should be confident, and resolute when he should hesitate. So far as it is used by children in learning to read, English spelling is a very effective device for manufacturing apathy and unreason upon a national scale.[1]

[1] The spelling of few other languages is as unphonetic as English, and in consequence the children of other nations spend less time in earning to read, e g.

" The rudiments of education only are taught in the primary schools, and it is surprising how quickly and well the little lads, both coloured and white, learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. But the simplicity of the Portuguese language, which is written as it is pronounced or according to unvarying rules, and the use of the decimal system of accounts, make these acquirements much easier than they are with us " (H. W. Bates, *The Naturalist on the Amazon*, ch. viii)

In the pamphlet quoted on p. 53 n , the Poet Laureate (p. 36) refers to the irrationality of our spelling-system, and adds in a note : " This is no exaggeration. Let a humane teacher think what an infant's mind is, the delicate bud of intelligence opening on the world, eager to adjust its awakening wonder to the realities of life, absolutely simple, truthful, and receptive . . . one has only to imagine that condition to realize that the most ingenious malignity could hardly contrive anything to offer it so perplexing, cramping, and discouraging as the unintelligible and unreasonable

Further, the irrationality of our spelling seriously
diminishes the power to write and appreciate
poetry and prose. The ability to write in
good style depends in a high degree upon
a proper and spontaneous apprehension of
the sounds of words. As this is unknown
to our writers, they depend for stylistic effects too
exclusively upon the meaning of words, and upon
their appearance to the eye. What a revaluation
would occur if we could all hear their words aright,
as we silently read, and how differently would they
have written if they had been able as they wrote
to listen effectively to the unheard sound of their
words! But this deep human desire and this
instinctive need have been starved in all of us:
they lie torpid. There is no public educated as it
should be to enjoy good and natural poetry.

Much of the beauty of Modern English is concealed.

.   .   .   .   .

Besides the erroneous notions about pronuncia-
tion, there is another illusion which the printed
page, aided by the study of grammar, has
produced. As printed, each sentence is
divided into a number of words, and it
is a general belief that a spoken sentence consists
of a number of separate sounds each of which has

The Units of Sound.

perplexities of English literary spelling. . . . better leave it alone
to find its own way, better teach it nothing at all, than worry it
with the incomprehensible, indefensible confusion of such non-
sense."

a meaning and each of which is a word. But the separation of sentences into words does not represent the phonetic facts. In speech words follow one another without any intervening pause, till the speaker hesitates. The sound-unit may coincide with a word : generally it contains several words. That no sentence is a mere aggregation of separate word-sounds can be easily demonstrated by trying to pronounce it with a pause, the smallest possible, after each word. The result is staccato, and quite different from the continuous even flow of a natural sentence. Each sound-unit, that is, each continuous sound between two pauses, is a phonetic whole whose parts affect one another, and it can no more be dissected into word-sounds than a living body can be separated into head, trunk, and limbs without the life departing. What we actually read is :

Thecurfewtollstheknellofpartingday ;
Thelowingherdwindslowlyo'erthelea ,
Theplowmanhomewardplodshiswearyway,
Andleavestheworldtodarknessandtome.

There may be pauses after *tolls* or *knell*, *herd*, *plods*, and *world* ; a pause at any other point sounds odd.

Exactly the same criticism applies to the division of words into elementary sounds. The Vowels and Consonants. vowels and consonants are nothing more than the ultimate abstract units which theoretical analysis reveals. A word cannot be made

by simply pronouncing its component vowels and consonants in correct succession ; nothing more than a fair approximation can be obtained from such an attempt. A word-sound, like every sound-unit, is an organic whole. It is true that vowels and some consonants, such as *f* and *ð*, can be pronounced by themselves, and the vowels are even used as words ; but most consonants cannot be pronounced by themselves, for they are but modes of manipulating vocalized breath.

For a living language to preserve its identity, it is necessary that some elements shall remain either absolutely or relatively fixed : otherwise the language would gradually deliquesce. Therefore, just as the vowels of Modern English are comparatively unstable, and when unaccented tend to converge, its consonants are carefully distinguished and preserved. These are general statements, with considerable exceptions, such as the Modern English *r*, which, when medial (as in *part*), has disappeared (pa:t) ; and when final has been transformed into *ə*, as in *near* ('ni.ə) and *roar* ('rɔ ə) ; and, especially in Scotland, *j* following *d* is often changed to *ʒ*, as in *due* (dju: and dʒu:). There is some evidence that in the past the vowels were more stable and the consonants less so. Substitution of consonants occurred, as in *bat* and *mate*, which were originally *bakke* and *make* : the Old English *breotan* and *brecan*, " to break," are variants of the

same word. Our modern consonants are little affected by surrounding vowels, but in older periods many voiceless consonants between two vowels were voiced and finally absorbed. Examples are: Old English *heafod* (*f* being pronounced *v*), which has become *head*, and *nægel*, which has become *nail*. Moreover, the numerous guttural consonants of Middle English have disappeared or have been transformed; in *plough*, *right*, *high*, they have gone; in *cough* and *enough* they have become *f*.

Another characteristic is the rarity of double consonants. These are as rare in pronunciation as they are common in spelling, where, as has been said, they are an orthographic device for indicating a preceding short vowel, as in *spell* (spel), *dropping* ('drəpiŋ), and *passage* ('pæsidʒ), and have never been pronounced. Almost the only double consonants in speech are found in compounds such as *lamppost* ('læmppo st), but some are heard in words consisting of a stem and suffix, such as *keenness* ('ki.nnəs), and *dully* ('dʌlli) and *foully* ('faŭlli), compared with *really* ('ri:əli).

The fifteenth-century disappearance of the vowels in the endings of words greatly increased the number of consonantal endings, drew together in large groups many consonants which had previously been separated, and produced a large number of monosyllables. These changes are of such

Further Characteristics of Modern English Speech.

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importance and have left so deep a mark upon speech that they deserve a short notice. Each may be illustrated by statistics or by examples.

(*a*) *Consonantal Endings*.—Twelve lines of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, taken at random, contained, out of ninety words, five which ended in a vowel (less than 6 per cent.). Twelve similar lines of Chaucer's Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* contained twenty-three words ending in a vowel (29 per cent.), and in twelve lines of Dante's *Divine Comedy* sixty-eight words out of seventy-eight ended in a vowel (87 per cent.).

(*b*) *Groups of Consonants*.—Examples are : *helpèd* has become *helped* (helpt) ; and *handles* (hændlz), *didn't* (didnt), and *months* (mʌnθs). Sometimes Modern English has simplified such groups, as in *contempt* ('kontemt) and *column* ('kəlʌm). The pronunciation of *often* is more frequently ɔfn than ɔftən.

(*c*) *Monosyllables*.—The change towards monosyllabism that has taken place in the last three centuries is illustrated thus. The first ten lines of the Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* contain seventy-two words ; of the thirty words of more than one syllable twenty-two have lost a syllable in the intervening centuries, and the great majority of these have become monosyllabic. It has become possible to write quite long passages of good English which consist entirely of monosyllables.

Comparisons are sometimes made between the sounds of two different languages. Thus it is often said that Italian is softer than English and flows more easily, and the cause is generally ascribed to the fact that very many Italian words end in a vowel, while the majority of English words terminate in a consonant, or in a group of consonants. This, however, cannot in itself be the true explanation, because, as has already been explained, words are not pronounced in isolation, but are run together, and it is a necessity of all languages alike that vowels and consonants, either single or in groups, should alternate.

A glance at the second passage in the appendix on page 68 will show the true reason. In Italian the consonants are usually single, and when groups occur they are small. But the majority of English words end in consonants and consonant groups, and many of these in actual speech form large groups with the initial consonants of the following words. It is these numerous and complicated consonant groups which produce the relatively harsh sound of English. The passage referred to contains the following large groups: *lfw: nstfr: blt: blk: tlzw: dntl: nkr: sts: tfs: ldw: ŋkf:*.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

The following passages exhibit the use of the script described in this chapter. The first passage shows the individual words separately ; the second shows the actual sound that would be made in an average and natural reading of the piece. Pauses might occur at some other points.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn silence holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

ðə ˈkəːfjuː toːlz ðə nel əv′ pa tiŋ dei,
ðə ˈloːŋ həːd waɪnd ˈsloˑli ˈɔːə ðə liˑ,
ðə ˈplaŭmən ˈhoːmwəd plɔdz hiz ˈwɪːri wei,
ɔnd liˑvz ðə wəˑld tu ˈda.knəs′ ənd tu miː.

Naŭ feidz ðə ˈglimriŋ′ lændzkeip ɔn ðə saĭt,
ənd ɔːl ðə ′æ.ə ə ′sɔləm ′stɪlnəs hoˑldz,
Seiv ′(h)wæˑə ðə bɪtl (h-)wɪːlz hiz ′droˑniŋ flaĭt,
ənd ′draŭzi ′tiŋklɪŋz lʌl ðə ′distənt foːldz.

" Mrs. Corney was about to solace herself with a cup of tea. As she glanced from the table to the fireplace, where the smallest of all possible kettles was singing a small song in a small voice, her inward satisfaction evidently increased—so much so, in-

deed, that Mrs. Corney smiled. ' Well! ' said the matron, leaning her elbow on the table, and looking reflectively at the fire, ' I'm sure we have all on us a great deal to be grateful for : a great deal, if we did but know it ! ' "

ˈMisizˈkɔniwəzəˈbaŭttuˈsɔləːʃəːselfᶦ|wiðəˈkʌpəvˈtiːˌəzʃiːˈglaːnstfrəm ðəˈteibltuðəˈfaĭəpleiːs ˙ wæːəðˈsmɔːlistəvɔːlˈpɔsiblˈketlz ¹ ˌwəzˈsiŋiŋə smɔlˈsɔŋinəmɔːlˈvoĭsˌhəːinwʌdsætisˈfækʃənˈevidntliinˈkriːstˌsoːˈmʌtʃ soːindiːdˌðətˈmisizkɔːnismaĭldˌwelsedðəˈmeitrən ˈliniŋhəːˈ elboːɔnðəˈ teiblˌəndˈlukiŋrifiektivliətðəˈfaĭə aĭmˈʃɔːɔwiːvˈɔːlɔnʌsəˈgreitdiːltubi θæŋkfʌlfɔəgreitdiːlˌifwiːdidbʌtˈnoːit.

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¹ These pauses are not necessary. The secondary accents are not indicated.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEANING OF WORDS

An unimpeachable authority has estimated that there are in Modern English more than 800 pairs of words which differ in meaning and origin but which are identical in sound,[1] and he finds that the great majority of them are included in the ordinary educated man's speaking vocabulary. These are totally different words, such as *vane*, *vein*, and *vain*. The number of ambiguous terms is greatly increased if words are included that possess meanings which have little or no perceptible connexion, such as *part* (" character " and " share ") ; and the number of words which have developed numerous connected but distinct meanings is immense. That they rarely cause real ambiguity in the sentence is due to the fact that the context determines the significance of a word. To read " Miss X beaten at Wimbledon " on a newspaper poster arouses no uncomfortable alarm, for in this phrase

Words identical in Sound.

[1] Dr Bridges in *English Homophones* (Society for Pure English, Tract No. 2, p. 5).

part of the meaning of *Wimbledon* is carried into *beaten*.

So little danger is there of ambiguity owing to identity of sounds that the language will sometimes go out of its way, needlessly, to produce homonyms. There are two words *compound*, *compound* the opposite of *simple*, and *compound* " an enclosure." The second owes its form to the influence of the first, being originally *kampong*, a Malay word. Similarly, the Middle English word *mister*, a trade, has been changed into *mystery* owing to the influence of the other word *mystery*, which comes from Greek. How this occurred can be seen from the manner in which we associate *pest* and *pester*, although between these words there is no real etymological connexion, for *pester* is related to the French *empêtrer* " to hinder," while *pest* is Latin *pesta*, " a plague or pestilence."

The sentence, not the word, is the unit of meaning ; a word has no meaning except in a sentence ; the meanings set out in a dictionary are merely those which it carries in various contexts. In strictness, therefore, the usual definition of a word as "a sound which has a meaning " is not true ; but if its limitations are understood it is approximately true, and has the advantage of emphasizing the connexion between sound and function or meaning. The connexion is essential, for a difference of function

The Unit of Meaning.

will frequently cause a difference of sound to develop, and a difference of meaning sometimes has the same effect.

The influence of context is very well seen in the way in which it determines the attachment of words. As they stand, the phrases " waste paper basket " and " collapsible baby carriage " are quite ambiguous : they might mean " a waste basket made of paper " and " a carriage for a collapsible baby " ; as they are used, the closest link in the former is between the first two words, in the latter between the last two. It is knowledge of the world that enables their proper meanings to be read into these phrases.

The Influence of Context.

The case against ambiguity must not be overstated. But when ambiguity of phrase causes misunderstanding, the mistake is usually due to mental differences between speaker and writer in the one case, and hearer and reader in the other, rather than to a confusion of sounds or to the formation of wrong attachments among the words of the sentence.

With the exception of onomatopœic words and a few others, the connexion between sound and meaning is in appearance arbitrary. However it originated, the association of the two is now a pure convention ; there is nothing in the sound to indicate the meaning. There is no evident relation between

The Meaning of Words is due to Convention.

the sounds of the words *book* and *man* and the things they denote. *Man* might just as well stand for a volume of print and *book* for a human being, so far as the sound is concerned, and in other languages other sounds express the same ideas with equal suitability.[1]

As language is at best an imperfect instrument, the conventionally symbolic nature of words always

Ambiguity. holds open the door to error. A certain idea is translated by a speaker into definite sounds, which are heard by a listener and retranslated into the material of thought. The idea formed by the listener should coincide exactly with that possessed by the speaker ; but, even though he has heard aright, inasmuch as the correspondence between the sound and the

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[1] There is a mystical view that words (and other things) are " real " or " inherent " symbols, held e g. by Mr W. B. Yeats (see his *Ideas of Good and Evil*) ; and in a naturalistic way Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie comes very near to the same thing in his pamphlet on *Poetry and Contemporary Speech*. He says (p. 3) : " A person may have beautiful and elevated feelings, he may have sound notions and even sound practice in intellectual form, he may have some command of metre : but if he cannot add to these one kind or another of what we call the magic of words . . . if he has not the power of making words live with a special and unusual kind of life in his verses, it is justifiable to question his right to the title of poet." In Mr. Yeats's terms this would be—" A poet is one who can find and use the symbolism inherent in words, which has nothing to do with their conventional symbolism (or current meaning)."

meaning varies from mind to mind, a degree of difference may creep in. This is usually why the hearer does not always frame the exact idea that the speaker intended to convey to him.

The 50,000 or so words that compose our mental currency, enormous as they are in bulk, are not nearly enough to express all the different shades of meaning that we are accustomed to deal with. To many of them a dozen or more meanings belong, as every dictionary shows. Considerable economy is practised by us in the expansions of the vocabulary that have to be made from time to time. When a new meaning thrusts itself into notice and demands a symbol, two courses are, theoretically, open. A new term can be employed, or the meanings of a word which already exists can be added to and extended. In the former case, a new sound can be created, or a word can be borrowed from another language. The natural method, that is, the method which involves less conscious effort, is to extend the meaning. Extension of meaning is the line of least resistance, but it is also the line of least consistency.

Extension of Meaning.

The process can best be made clear by considering an example. The word *key* means, in its concrete sense, " an instrument, usually of iron, for moving the bolt of a lock backwards and forwards." It has come to mean also the winding instrument

of a clock, and any instrument for grasping pegs and nuts. For these latter senses the words *winder* and *grasper* might have been coined : it is only by an extension of the original sense that *key* can denote such instruments. But it has been extended to further metaphorical senses, for it means " that which reveals or explains a secret," as in the phrase " the key of the puzzle," and so, by a similar natural extension, it signifies " the central principle," and " that on which all else depends " ; in musical contexts it means " a system of notes related to one another through being based upon a particular note," and in economics it is used in the compound *key-industry*.

In this manner, as growing civilization feels the need for the finer distinctions which are necessary for the elaborate commerce of modern life, the meanings of words continually tend to be differentiated. The process is not universal, however, for sometimes the reverse occurs. When the word *bounce* first appeared in literature it carried indifferently the meanings *bang*, *bound*, and *blow*, of which only the second survives.

Differentiation of Meaning.

All these—and all other—extensions, differentiations, and alterations of meaning are produced by some definite and comprehensible cause, and take place through some explicable association of ideas and things or events. The connexion may be a

principle of universal application, such as metaphor or metonymy, or may be an accidental association. The word *magenta* owes its meaning to such an accident ; the crimson dye of that name, having been discovered about the time when the battle of Magenta was fought, received the name of the battle in consequence. A secondary meaning may give rise to further developments, and perish subsequently, with the result that the transition from the earlier meaning to the later appears to be quite fortuitous. But in reality it is never so. The various meanings of *fast*—" firm and immovable," " rapid," and " near," as in :

> There is a cave
> Within the mount of God, fast by His throne
> (*Paradise Lost*, Book VI, line 4)

—have no obvious connexion, but there can be no doubt that a full knowledge of the vanished links would provide a complete explanation.

In general, the concrete meanings of a word are earlier than the abstract : normally, abstraction and differentiation proceed simultaneously. Primary Meaning. This is so in the instance already taken of the word *key* : it is true of *path* and *brilliant*; *acrimonious* carried at first only a physical sense of " bitter "; *acute* originally meant no more than " sharp " in the concrete sense ; *right* meant " straight," and *wrong* meant " crooked "

or " twisted." But the exceptions are too numerous for any rule to be stated : *dull* meant " stupid " before it meant " blunted." *Management* is an abstract term as a rule, meaning "control," but in any restaurant can be observed the legend " The management cannot hold themselves responsible for customers' umbrellas."

Not infrequently the primary meaning dies away and the derivative meaning remains. A good example is found in *dilapidated*. *Dilapidated* is a word of wide application ; we can speak of " a dilapidated coat " without any sense of incongruity, because the original meaning is now quite dead. The word, however, being derived from Latin *lapis* a stone, may have meant " with the stone surface defaced," and, if that was so, could only be applied to buildings. In order to use such words with precision and grace, it is necessary to have in mind the original meaning. Good style depends upon the possession of this power almost as much as upon the power to appreciate the actual sound. The early meaning, which is generally the concrete meaning, casts a halo round the later meanings, and if a writer does not know the early meaning he is unduly subject to current and temporary fashion, and his style loses in light and colour. By means of the concrete and abstract meanings he can appeal at one and the same time to the imagination and the reason, can

illustrate and argue in one breath. On this account, it is useful to know that *engine* is Latin *ingenium*, a device ; that *consider* meant " to take counsel of the stars " ; that *read* meant " to explain or interpret " before it meant " to translate visible signs into audible signs." To be able to revive the connexion of *engine* with *ingenious*, of *wreath* with *writhe*, and of *read* with *ready* and *riddle* confers upon them a richness of meaning which cannot be attained in any other way. *Eminent* originally meant " projecting " ; *extravagant* meant " wandering out of bounds " ; *heathen* meant " one who dwells on a heath or waste." To use them or any other word in the original sense, when that is no longer current, would be pedantic ; but to forget it is rash.[1]

The following series of cognate words illustrate the developments of a concrete root meaning, and the advantages of having this root meaning in mind :

(1) Root idea " to plough " : *earth*, *earn*.

(2) Root idea " to twist or turn " : *wring*, *wrong*, *wrinkle*, *wry*, *awry*, *writhe*, *wriggle*, *wreath*, *wreathe*, *Wrath* (the Cape of that name), *wrangle*, *wrench*, *wrist*, *wrest*, *wrestle*, *worm*, *write*.

(3) Root idea " to fall " : *drowse*, *drizzle*, *drool*,

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[1] E.g. " Signor Marconi said that the disturbances caused by the effects of atmospheric electricity would be *greatly minimized* by the new system of long-distance communication " (*Daily News*).

dribble, *drip*, and, more remotely, *drink* and *drench*.

(4) *Two*, *twice*, *twin*, *twinkle*, *twain*, *between*, *twill*, *twilight*, *twine*, *twist*.

All these are Saxon : by bringing in Aryan cognates such lists could be much enlarged.

Being symbols, sounds, whether alone or in combination, follow the law of symbolic development ;
Contraction without Loss of Meaning that is to say, they tend to become more and more attenuated without losing meaning. Just as picture-writing consisted at first of elaborate drawings of objects and was progressingly simplified, a set of sounds representing a meaning may contract. This can be observed in sentences, phrases, and words. " John is taller than James " means " John is taller than James is tall " ; " No wonder " and " Let me in " commenced their careers as " It is no wonder " and " Let me come in." In all these cases the meaning remains the same, but the symbol has changed.

To put the matter in another way, wordsymbols possess the power of absorbing the meaning of the surrounding context, which can then be discarded without appreciable loss. Owing to this power, *but* can mean " not but " or " nothing but " :

> They had not sailed a league, a league,
> A league but barely three

is equivalent to " They had sailed but three

leagues." Not a few words have absorbed the meaning of several different contexts. *Waterloo* means "the battle fought at Waterloo" and "Waterloo Station"; *Station* itself is short for both "police station" and "railway station"; *a general* means "a captain general," "a general servant," and "an omnibus belonging to the London General Omnibus Company"; *cretin* and *natural* have both acquired the meaning of *idiot* by absorption of context. We see a similar phenomenon in such shortenings of words as *influenza* into *flu* and *omnibus* into *bus*.

Before passing on to further causes of change in meaning, it will be useful to consider a few examples which will serve to illustrate the complicated nature of the phenomena that have to be reduced to general terms. The three words *restive*, *dragoon*, and *size* will suffice.

Expansion, Contraction, and Shifting of Meaning.

Restless and *restive* are now almost synonymous. *Restive*, however, as applied to a horse, means "troublesome because unwilling to stand still"; previous to that, the meaning was more general, being simply "troublesome"; "troublesome" itself was an expansion of an earlier meaning, which was "troublesome because it cannot be persuaded to move"; and this was derived from the original meaning of "unwilling to move." Hence *restive* has reversed its meaning.

Dragoon and *dragon* are two forms of the same word. A dragon was an imaginary fire-breathing monster · after the invention of firearms the term was applied to them : it was then transferred to soldiers who carried an arm of this nature : at a later period these soldiers were mounted : the behaviour of this soldiery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attached a definite connotation of brutality to the word *dragoon* : and finally the free functioning of words in Modern English produced the verb *to dragoon*, that is, " to compel by means of brutal severity."

Size means " dimensions, or measure " : *to size up* means " to take the measure " or " to form an estimate " : *size* is a shortened form of *assize*. The word *assize* or *assizes* means " a court of justice presided over by the judges on circuit." But it was originally applied to " the King's session in Council " : thence it came to mean " an order made by the king sitting in Council," such as the Assize of Clarendon. Some of these regulations gave rise to forms of procedure which were so closely associated with them that an action under them was itself called an assize. From this it was given first to the jury that tried such an action, and ultimately to the court at which the trial was held. All these meanings except the last are now obsolete, and it is this last which has produced the word *size* in its various current uses.

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If the meanings of words are conceived on the analogy of space, it can be said that they expand or contract, and that, by expanding and subsequently contracting round a new centre, they shift. *Restive* illustrates this process, which is so natural a process that there is scarcely any need to look for cause or motive for it.

In other cases shifting occurs directly. *Anon*, *soon*, and *presently* all owe their current meanings to the frailty, or unpunctuality, of human nature : all alike originally meant *immediately*, their force being gradually weakened till they came to mean *y* after a short interval." From the dislike that most English people feel for describing physical processes in too characteristic terms common words are frequently used in new senses. " I will *have* tea and toast " means " I will *drink* some tea and *eat* some toast." We " put a dog out of the way " instead of *poisoning* him. " I hope nothing *has happened to* him " is a euphemism for " I hope he is not *dead*." Irony is responsible for the shifting of the meaning of *rather* to " exceedingly." The same motives have operated occasionally in the formation of words : thus humorous irony is seen in the addition of the augmentative suffix *-ard* to *tank*, to form *tankard*, " a drinking vessel " ; and humorous hyperbole in the compound *sky-scraper*.

Shifting of this kind is a comparatively rare

phenomenon ; much commoner are the changes of
meaning which are called metaphor and metonymy.

Metaphor is produced by some real or
Metaphor   fancied similarity. It is an effect of
energetic imagination, and is so natural a process
that it frequently occurs without the speaker
being conscious that he has used a word in a
new or unusual sense. Many of our commonest
proverbs are metaphorical—" It's a long lane
that has no turning " ; " Birds of a feather flock
together " ; " A new broom sweeps clean." It
is because of this imaginative quality that resides
in so many of their meanings that words are some-
times called fossil poetry. But many of our meta-
phorical meanings are very homely ; the legs of a
chair are so called because of their similarity to
the legs of an animal or human being—a similarity
of use, if not of appearance. Metaphor has saved
us the labour of coining an immense number of
new terms.

In contrast with Metaphor, Metonymy is a kind
of inexactness, owing its origin to practical con-
venience or to desire for brevity as often
Metonymy.   as to invention seeking to avoid the pain
of creating new words, and it also differs from
metaphor in that it does not depend upon simi-
larity. The leg of a chair received its name be-
cause of a similarity, but the head of a bed is so
named because it is the part where the human

head is expected to repose. We can easily see the advantage of Metonymy by examining such a sentence as " Nearly every woman wore a gardenia pinned *to the shoulder*." A more exact expression of the idea would be cumbrous.

The associations expressed by Metonymy are too numerous to be described. The part may be used for the whole, as in " My humble roof." " Boots " is an excellent shortening of " The hotel servant who cleans the boots of the guests." That which is contained may receive the name of the container, as in " The kettle is boiling "; the effect may be substituted for the cause, or vice versa. Like metaphor, metonymy is often unconsciously employed.

Words are not only fossil poetry : they are fossil history and fossil culture. Obsolete habits of action have left permanent and palpable traces in Modern English. *Plunder* dates from the Civil War, *loot* from the conquest of India in the eighteenth century, *ransack* from the Danish invasions ; and each of these words is an importation, *plunder* from German, *ransack* from Scandinavian, and *loot* from Hindustani. *Crestfallen* and *pit* (of a theatre) are relics of cock-fighting.

<div style="margin-left:2em"><small>Survival of Obsolete Habits of Thought and Action.</small></div>

Extinct theories, beliefs and habits of thought have been even more potent in their influence. *Disaster* is an astrological word. Though the heart

is no longer supposed to be the seat of courage, affection and intelligence, we still speak of *hearty* and of " learning by heart," and the words *cordial* and *courage* owe their origin to this idea. An even more conspicuous illustration is found in mediæval medical theory. According to this, every substance was thought to be composed of one or more of four elements, solid, liquid, gas, and ether or fire, mixed in varying proportions. As components of the human body these elements were called " humours," and on the proportions in which they were combined temperament was supposed to depend. The word *temperament* itself means " mixture," and *ill-humoured*, *humorous*, *temper*, and *bad-tempered* all spring from this source. The names of the four humours were *sanguis* (in English, " blood "), *choler*, *melancholy*, and *rheum*, and from them came *sanguine*, *choleric*, *melancholy*, and *rheumatic*, all of which are in common use, the first three as terms of popular psychology, the last as a medical term. *Complexion*, which, like *temperament*, meant mixture, originated in the same way.

The gradual and imperceptible shifting of meaning has had the effect of incessantly modifying the relations of words ; some drift apart, and others approach one another. Because of these readjustments, and because of the facility with which English has borrowed from other tongues, many pairs of synonyms have appeared

Absolute and Partial Synonyms.

in the language. But it is wasteful to retain words identical in meaning, and the English language is economical; it abhors a synonym as nature abhors a vacuum. In consequence, absolute synonyms, that is, pairs of words which are identical in all their meanings, such as *begin* and *commence*, *little* and *small*, are rare. On the other hand, pairs of words, such as *character* and *part*, which coincide in one meaning but not in others, are exceedingly numerous. They are produced by the duplication of single terms, such as *an* and *one*; by the differentiation of absolute synonyms, such as *shall* and *will*; and by the approximation of terms that were quite different in meaning. *Monstrous* originally signified " remarkable," *enormous* signified " abnormal," and *tremendous* meant " terrifying " : these three words, although they retain a slight suggestion of their primitive senses, are now synonymous with *big*, *great*, *vast*, and *huge*.

We are so accustomed to the words of the mother-tongue that we do not easily realize that a great intellectual effort is implied in the creation of the words that compose the simplest sentence, and that in its totality every modern sentence represents a great accumulation of mental labour. Words are coins which we treat as of little value, because when we spend them there is as much left as ever; yet the most concrete of them, as well as the profoundest abstractions, are the

Conclusion.

results of human energy.   Language is no crude or
photographic copy of the details of man's environ-
ment.   It stands as a living monument of man's
work upon the reality around him.   It is full of
generalizations : it contains not only names of
things. actions, and feelings. but also words that
express relations between things.

In this chapter there is little that is distinctively
and peculiarly English.   The linguistic principles
described are of wide application, and most of
them could be illustrated equally well from other
languages.   They are, however, indispensable for a
proper comprehension of the nature of English
words.

CHAPTER V

THE forces are twofold which bring about the creation of words and the formal changes they subsequently undergo. There is the deliberate interference of individual persons, and there is an automatic pressure which in the mode of its operation resembles a natural force. On the whole, the former governs the manufacture of words and the latter their formal changes, but in their action the two are not necessarily separate.

Although it is impossible to be quite certain of the changes that English words are now undergoing —for in general it is not until a change is an accomplished fact that it becomes perceptible—changes which have occurred in the past throw a strong light upon changes which must be now taking place. Every sound is exposed to the possibility of automatic change, and every sound may influence other sounds in its vicinity. The vowels in *finger*, *strength*, *knit*, and *gild* are modifications of the vowels in *fang*, *strong*, *knot*, and *gold* occasioned by a vanished vowel in the

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ending of these words. The vowels in *bind, bond,*
and *band* are the results of differences in the position
of the accents carried by the polysyllabic words
from which these monosyllables are descended.
Similarly, the verb *present* (prizént) is gradually
distinguishing itself from the noun and adjective
present (préz(ə)nt), and the verb *separate* (sépəre:t)
is drawing apart from the adjective *separate* (séprət).
In these words are to be observed the beginnings
of a process, an incipient differentiation that may
ultimately produce pairs of words so widely diver-
gent that their common origin will not be easily
discerned.

Again, sounds may grow anywhere, and any
sound may become silent. There are now two
pronunciations of *anxious* and three of *often* (æ̃ŋ∫ʌs
and æ̃ŋk∫ʌs, and ɔ'∫tɔn, ɔfn, and ɔ:fn). *d* and *t*
have grown at the end of many words, e.g. *sound,*
expound, tyrant, and *peasant,* and at the middle of
many others, such as *tender* and *thunder.* *k* is heard
in the illiterate pronunciation of *anything* (éniθiŋk).
In Southern English many words which end in ə, such
as *idea,* are in danger of developing an *r* after the ə.

t has disappeared in *Christmas, hasten, fasten,*
listen, and sometimes in *postman,* and many other
words ('krisməs, he:sn, fæsn, lisn, po':smən, etc.) ;
and *w* before *r* and *l,* in *wrist* and *lip* : the former
is still spelt, but the latter vanished from pro-
nunciation so long ago that it has left no visible

trace in the spelling. *g* and *k* survive in spelling before *n*, although no longer sounded (*gnat*, *gnash*, *know*, and *knee*). Many words have lost an initial *h*, as *it* (hit) and *'em* (hem). The loss of final sounds needs no illustration : almost every word of Modern English which is four centuries old has suffered this loss. If the final sound was a vowel, it disappeared entirely ; if it consisted of a vowel and consonant, the vowel was often lost, as in *lordès*, *lord's*.

The consonants which came together in consequence of the last-mentioned change have affected one another in innumerable words, *s* frequently becoming *z*, as in the case just cited, and *d* becoming *t*, as in *possessed*, *possesst* (po:zésəd, po:zést).

The influence of a vowel upon a consonant in close proximity must not be forgotten. Owing to a palate vowel *ı* which has now vanished, many consonants have been modified. This is the explanation of the relation between *bleak* and *bleach*, *drink* and *drench*, *blınk* and *blench*, *seek* and *beseech*, and of the change that has occurred in many words containing *ti*, e.g. the Latin *nationem* (natio:nem) has become the English *natıon* (neʃ(ə)n).

The causes of the alienation of words that were once the same are various. First, a word used in different functions may acquire two pronunciations, as *récord* (noun) and *recórd* (verb). Secondly, the same word may be borrowed

Doublets.

from another language at different times, like
barrage (bærid in irrigation, bærá·ʒ in gunnery),
from French; or once directly and once indirectly,
through the medium of a third tongue, like *fact*
and *feat*, *dignity* and *dainty*, the former of which
come directly from Latin, and the latter through
French; or by two indirect routes, like *hussar*
and *corsair*, which have come to us by different
routes from Italian.   Thirdly, the various mean-
ings of the same word may so affect the word
itself as to end in producing different forms, as in
an and *one*, *to* and *too*.   From a combination of such
causes, *ring*, *harangue*, *rink*, *rank*, and *ranch* are
all forms of the same Old Teutonic word *hring*.
Lastly, two dialectal forms like *to* and *till*, *dyke*
and *ditch*, *slide* and *slither* (the Saxon and Danish
forms) may establish themselves in the standard
speech.

The results of these processes are surprising:
cretin is a doublet of *Christian*, *manure* of *manœuvre*,
cipher of *zero*, *glamour* of *grammar*, *banjo* of *man-
doline*, *sentry* of *sanctuary*, *course* of *coarse*; while,
although their meanings seem to be quite unrelated,
dominion, *danger*, and *dungeon*, when traced back
finally coincide.

Usually the effect which one sound exerts upon
another can be easily explained, for most of these
changes are caused by the structure of the mouth,
each modification bringing others in its train.

But no general and satisfactory explanation has ever been given of the changes that occur in sounds without any influence flowing upon them from surrounding sounds. Though the history of the process is known, the change of Old English long *a*'s into long *o*'s (*bāt, stān, boat, stone*) is unexplained, and a similar obscurity reigns over more recent changes. In many words *-ar* has changed into *-er* in the last two centuries, as in *perfect*, from *parfit* (the *-fect* is a learned spelling which has affected the pronunciation, the word *parfit* coming from the French *parfait*). All our unaccented vowels seem to be changing into ə (to this, however, the strength of the accent can be assigned as cause) : ɔ is lengthening in many words, as in *often* and *dog* (ɔfn and ɔ:ʃn, dɔg and dɔ:g). The sound *u:* is altering greatly : we have *poor* (pú:ə), but *door, floor*, etc. (dɔ:ə, flɔ':ə), *good* and *food, foot* and *boot* (gud, fu:d, fut, bu:t). *Pú:ə* is still the standard sound of *poor*, but many educated people already say *pɔ':ə*, and probably *pɔ:* will be universal before another generation has elapsed.

All (or nearly all) such changes, that is to say, nearly all changes which occur in words after they have been created, take place without any interference by consciousness. But the creation itself must, in general, involve some conscious effort. The degree of

The Formation of New Words.

will and thought that accompanies it varies from deliberate and complete volition, and explicit consciousness, down to an operation apparently as spontaneous and unreflective as the growth of a plant.

Every act of word-formation, and every extension of meaning too, must be performed by an individual : words are not created by groups of men : one originates and the rest follow. Since this is so, every such creation must bear, when new, the impress of its creator's character. The image may be defaced and worn away during the centuries, but it must have been there originally. And, just as men can be arranged in classes, as learned and unlearned, cultured and rude, the words created by members of these classes will be found to differ and divide themselves into species.

Names like *Kodak*, *Zog*, *Lemco*, *Luvisca*, and *Ronuk*, which rapidly become descriptive words, are as machine-made as the products to

Coinages.

which they are attached. The most notable example of this kind is the word *gas*, which was coined by a Dutch chemist at the end of the sixteenth century, has passed into many languages, and in English has given rise to the derivatives *gaseous*, *gasolene*, *gasometer*, *gassy*, and to many compounds. Sometimes a little spurious culture creeps into such words, as in *Bovril* and *Oxo*, *Nostroline*, which cures colds and catarrhs,

Cuticura for the skin, the *Aquascutum* which shields the body from wet, and the *Chilprufe* which keeps it warm. A few of these have a genuine derivational form : the majority betray their commercial origin.

Most of the truly scientific words that are so numerous in Modern English are as correct and Scientific Terms exact in structure as they are precise in meaning. *Bromide, papilionaceous, anthropoid, appendicitis, anemometer, gyroscope, helicopter, calibration,* and *heuristic* belong to chemistry, botany, zoology, medicine, meteorology, mechanics, aeronautics, gunnery, and pedagogy. All of them are Greek in origin, except *papilionaceous,* which is Latin, and *calibration,* which is Latinized Arabic. All these words, except the compound word *helicopter,* moreover, are exact derivatives consisting of a stem and affixes correctly joined together.

It would be possible to gather a long list of deliberately-created words whose authorship is known or highly probable, and whose Words whose Authorship is known. meaning, and to some extent form, express their authors' personality. It was probably the irascible Dr. Johnson who endowed the word *acrimonious,* which had thitherto meant " bitter " in the physical sense only, with the meaning which it now always carries.[1] Shake-

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[1] Arbuthnot (1732), " All substances that abound with an acrimonious salt . . ." Johnson (1775), " malignity thus acrimonious."—N.E.D.

speare gave us numerous poetical words, of which
baseless and *fitful* are two (in " the baseless fabric of
this vision " and " life's fitful fever "). *Centrifugal*,
as might almost be expected, is first found in the
writings of the discoverer of the laws of motion
(Newton's *Principia*—" Haec est vis *centrifuga* qua
corpus urget circulum "), and the word *logarithm*,
used in the title " *Mirifici* Logarithmorum *Canonis
Descriptio*," is no less consistent with the nature of
Napier of Merchiston's mind. Jeremy Bentham
made *international* (*Principles of Legislation*, xvii,
25 : " The law may be referred to under the head
of international jurisprudence. *Note*.—The word
international, it must be acknowledged, is a new
one, though, it is hoped, sufficiently analogous and
intelligible "). A very interesting example is found
in Marlowe's word *topless*, which, although it is rare,
is in current use by novelists and journalists, e.g.
Meredith, *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, ch. 43, " Gray
topless ruins." [1]   Marlowe uses it in a reference to
Helen of Troy :

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
> And burnt the *topless* towers of Ilium ?
>
> *Dr. Faustus,* ll. 1329–30.[2]

In contrast with words of known authorship
stands a very numerous class, mostly simple in

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[1] Quoted from N.E.D.

[2] A chapter on this subject is to be found in L. Pearsall
Smith's invaluable little book on *The English Language*.

structure, which cannot be traced to any definite parentage. In English, as in other European languages, most words can be referred with certainty to Aryan roots, but others are more recent than the time when written literature began. The word *jump*, for instance, is not found before the time of Shakespeare ; and, while *hound* is a word with cognates in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit, and is therefore very ancient, *dog* appears to have originated in English about the year 1000. In short, an examination of the sources of the Modern English vocabulary shows beyond the possibility of contradiction the once prevalent notion that all modern European words were derived from roots equally old, and could be traced back to a single ancestral tongue, to be a mistake induced by the superficial uniformity presented by languages to their speakers. It is clear that absolutely new words are continually being added to our store.

New Creations.

The words which press from popular speech into the sedater world of written books are of peculiar interest because the methods by which they are made may be expected to throw some light upon the mysteries of the oldest word-creations. As, being of low social origin, they belong, or once belonged, to that department of English which is often held in contempt, their simplicity of structure is natural. Their brevity and formlessness accord as well with

Words of Popular Origin

the character of those who framed them first as does the precision of *bromide* and *papilionaceous* with the scientific minds of the men who are under the necessity of forming new words to indicate and record discoveries and inventions. Indeed, if among them we class words of more exact form, such as *clever*, *kidney*, *craven*, *average*, and *cantankerous*, it is probably because these words have origins that have not yet been discovered. They are travelling incognito, and may yet turn out to be of distinguished rank and ancestry. Some, like *hurry*, *fidget*, and *wheedle*; seem to possess a derivative structure, i.e. a stem and a suffix ; yet the suffix is a false one, for it has not, and, as far as we know, never had, a definite signification. Of the three instances cited, only the last possesses a verbal suffix which is regularly found in other words. In *lorry*, *gadget*, and *pebble*, three nouns, the same suffixes have just as much force, and just as little.

Every word must be either a new creation, or a suggestion derived in some way from other words, or partly one and partly the other. New creations may be built upon the natural exclamations which resemble the *Possible Modes of Formation.* cries of brute animals in function, or may be deliberate manufactures of the kind already described, or may be symbols of the sound or sense of the object or idea concerned.

7

Natural exclamations seem an obvious source of words. *Lackadaisical* is founded on *alackaday*, and *alack* is connected with *alas*, and this in its turn is not too far removed from *eh* and *ah*. But very few modern words can be explained in this way. It is necessary to push the inquiry much further.

Exclama-
tions.

Seeing that words are conventional symbols, it is reasonable to suppose that natural symbolism, or imitation, will afford an important clue to the solution of the problem. The simplest kind of natural word-symbolism is onomatopœia, in which the sound of the word is an endeavour to copy another sound, as in *whiz, plunge, cuckoo, bomb, squeal,* and *chatter*. The dictionary shows that the number of the words which may have originated in this way is very large. The echo of the sound is very definite in the instances cited ; it is less so in *slush, crush,* and many others. The reason of this is that there are a great many sounds that the human mouth is incapable of echoing with any degree of exactness. Man cannot really imitate, e.g., the sound of a cannon being fired. *Bang* and *roar* are the two nearest English efforts, and their equal frequency of use, and the great difference between them, are the proofs of their futility : the Elizabethan word was *bounce*, which is equally unsuccessful. Therefore, in word-symbolism suggestion is superior to imitation,

Onomato-
pœia.

although a good imitation, such as is seen in the precise difference between *clank* and *clang*, sometimes occurs.   *Sneeze, sniff, snore, snort, snuff, snuffle*, and *snivel* are an onomatopœic series, but even they, although they suggest sounds made by the human nose, fall short of imitation.   Such words can easily lose their suggestiveness, and, becoming arbitrary symbols, would then follow the ordinary laws of sound-development.   The word *nose* seems to have done this by losing an initial *s*, which remains in *snout*.   The verb *neeze* appeared also, but *sneeze* has managed to reinstate itself.   Once the original connexion has been effaced by formal changes in such words, it is impossible to decide whether or not they had an echoic origin.   It may be, as some authorities have held, that all or nearly all words have had an echoic origin, but it is difficult to ascribe such an origin to *boy*, *huge*, *tantrum, blunt, gaze, burglar, motley, hug* and many others of the class under consideration.

Words which symbolize meaning without any suggestion of sound are more difficult to deal with. Balance is clearly suggested by the word *see-saw*, and it is known that the word *flicker* at first referred exclusively to movement.   Both movement and sound are apparently implied in the words *shudder* and *shiver*.   But movement is almost the only kind of meaning except sound which seems to lend itself to imitation in the forms of words.

As a last resort, therefore, we are obliged to fall
back upon the ordinary mode of making new words,
that is, by utilizing old ones. It is quite
possible that many obscure words are
merely alterations of others that already
exist, for some irregular alterations which
can be traced with certainty involve such great
changes of form as to effect in many cases a com-
plete disguise. *Gaffer*, a colloquial form of *grand-
father*, is quite unlike its original, and the same is
true of *spadger* (from *sparrow*) and *titivate* (from
tidy). Again, as will be shown later, shortening is
a common habit, as in *demob* from *demobilize*, and
pub from *public-house*, and there is scant resemblance
between the full and the shortened forms. Deriva-
tion and compounding are regular and legitimate
methods of making new words, and uniform tables
of suffixes and prefixes can be drawn up (see p. 110).
But we sometimes find a new word formed with a
stem, or suffix, or prefix which has no parallel in
other words, as in row*dy* from *row*, and *um*teen,
constructed on the vague analogy of *thirteen*, *four-
teen*, etc. If, then, we allow that derivation may
vary from the precise building of a word out
of a stem and recognized affixes, as in *untruthful*,
from *un-*, *true*, *-th*, and *-ful*, down to the vaguest
hint taken from other words, we may find a
fruitful means for accounting for words of popular
origin. There is some suggestion of *sway* and

swing in *swank*, of *peep* in *peer*, of *grumble* in *grouse*, and of *bogey* in *bogus*. Moreover, it is not impossible to imagine that some words may have been formed by joint suggestions from two or more words. It is known that before the word *scratch* appeared in literature there existed two others, *cratch* and *scrat*, both of which meant the same as *scratch* does, and both of which are now obsolete; and before *humpbacked* (of which *hump* is a back-formation) existed, both *hunchbacked* and *crumpbacked* were used.

It is possible that even yet we have not fully accounted for all the words of popular origin, and that there are forces determining their forms whose nature will for ever remain an unanswered riddle. No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered of *curse*, *pebble*, *pig*, *hog*, *pink*, *blight*, *queer*, *rogue*, *fog*, *dodge*, *burglar*, *jam*, *crease*, *motley*, *fit*, *squander*, *shark*, and a host of others. The interested reader can amuse himself by glancing over the list of words of popular origin on page 135, and trying to decide which method of explanation best suits each. Any explanation of them besides those offered here will afford likewise an additional key to the processes by which the earliest words used by primitive man took their shapes.

Though English words of popular origin are usually simple, a fondness for reduplicated forms

is to be observed, as in *claptrap, tiptop, hurly-burly, hanky-panky, zigzag, humdrum, namby-pamby,* and *helter-skelter. Whim* is believed

Reduplica-tion.

to be a shortening of *whim-wham,* and *flimsy* to have come from *flim-flam.* Other languages, particularly early and primitive tongues, display the same tendency.

The two regular methods of forming words from existing word-material are known as Compounding and Derivation. In Old English, which

Compounds

borrowed relatively few words, both methods were employed frequently. The study of Latin and the strong influence of French during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as both these tongues avoid compounds and lean heavily to the derivative method, by rendering compounding less necessary, caused English to lose some of its power of compounding. In modern times the power has revived; and at present compounding is the rule, and derivation the exception. How rife it is can be seen from the following quotation: "Many readers have written to ask where they can obtain the *thief-proof headlock* to which I referred last week while discussing my *Dreadnought.* They can get it on the *all-black Sunbeam*" (*Daily News*). At the same time the habit of borrowing has greatly decreased, except by compounding Greek words for use in certain departments of the language.

Examples of Old English compounds are *hand-seax* (hand-knife, i.e. dagger), *handplega* (handplay, i.e. battle), *sigorbeorht* (victory-bright, i.e. triumphant), and *woruld-candel* (world-candle, i.e. sun). Surviving words of this type are *rainbow*, *highland*, *almighty*, and *handicraft*.

As the following list shows, compounding has persisted through all the vicissitudes that English has experienced since the Middle Ages :

Downright . . (1205)	Pocket-knife . . (1727)
	Heartfelt . . (1734)
Downfall . . (1300)	Subdue . . (1768)
Downcast . . (1305)	Railroad . . (1775)
Earthquake . (1340)	Matchbox . . (1786)
Blackbird . . (1470)	
Mainsail . . (1485)	
Sweepstake . (1495)	Lifeboat . . (1801)
	God end . . (1814)
Postman . . (1529)	Penholder . . (1815)
Sunburnt . . (1530)	Steamship . . (1819)
Footstep . . (1535)	Tramway . . (1825)
Scarecrow . . (1572)	Trademark . . (1838)
Eyeball . . (1590)	Come-down . . (1840)
Keyhole . . (1592)	Runner-up . . (1842)
	Tree fern . . (1846)
Outbreak . . (1602)	Get-up . . (1847)
Evergreen . . (1644)	Matchboard . . (1858)
Everyday . . (1647)	Ironclad . . (1859)
Chairman . . (1654)	Creamlaid . . (1863)
Guineapig . . (1664)	Benchmark . . (1864)
Set-back . . (1674)	Typewriter . . (1875)

Airman, war loan, picture-house, and *highbrow* are

typical members of a great army of even more recent formations.   All are true compounds [1]

The essence of a compound word is that it Tests of true shall symbolize a single thing or idea. Compounds Whether it is spelt as one word, or hyphened, or spelt as two words, makes no difference.

The pronunciation has more significance than the spelling, for the position of the accent generally alters when two words coalesce as a compound ; the accent in " a broad street " and " Broad Street " shows that the latter consecution of sounds is a compound word and the former is not.   The difference between " air man " (e·əmǽn) and " airman " (éːəmən) is not merely that " airman " means " a man who flies in an aeroplane," while " air man " might mean " an imaginary man composed of air," but that the sounds of the two are different.   The alteration of the position of the accent has caused another change in pronunciation to take place, namely, the change of the vowel *æ* into *ə* in the second syllable.

That many words which are separated in spelling are in reality compounds is also proved by the fact that they are grammatically treated as if they were

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[1] The dates given in the brackets are the dates of the first instances recorded in the *New English Dictionary*.   Of course, some of these words existed in speech long before they found their way into literature.

single words. The passive voice is formed from compound verbs, and inflexions are added to the last only of the terms of a compound, as in " William the Conqueror's victory at Senlac," and " The story of Roger North's brother Dudley's marriage." " William the Conqueror " is usually thought of as three words, and it is common to say that *William* and *Conqueror* are in apposition. But on this explanation, in strictness, the phrase should be " William's the Conqueror's victory at Senlac," seeing that the inflected languages from which the notion of apposition is derived turn nouns in apposition into the same case.[1] For English it is simpler and more natural to regard *William the Conqueror* as a single word.

Most compounds are formed by the welding of two words that already exist in the language, but a certain number pass by direct borrowing from other tongues into English. The majority of these, if not already compounded, are deliberate formations; some few may be unconscious transformation of phrases into single words. Probably the former process has happened in *extempore* (from Latin *ex* and

Borrowed Compounds.

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[1] The same dilemma occurs when words which are usually nouns are used attributively with other nouns, as in *fairy tale*, *woman M.P.* If these are nouns in apposition they should take the sign of the plural when the whole word is used in the plural.

tempore), *sine qua non* (from scholastic Latin), *fac-totum*, *sinecure* (from Latin *sine* and *cura*), *im-promptu* (from Latin *in* and *promptu*). But in other cases unconscious combination is more likely. *Checkmate* is from the Arabic *Shahmat* (the King is dead). *Galore* is from two Irish words *go* and *leor*, meaning " to sufficiency "; *claymore* from two Gaelic words *claidheamh mor*, meaning " great sword "; and *carouse* is the first two words of the German *gar aus* (*trinken*), " drink to the dregs." Bishop Tillotson asserted that *hocus-pocus* was a word dating from Reformation time, being an ironical imitation of *Hoc est corpus*, " this is the body (of Christ)," said by the priest in administering the sacrament. This explanation is probably true, but remains unproved. The *Pall Mall Gazette's* ascription of *hokey-pokey* to an Italian ice-cream vendor's cry " O che poco " (Oh how little !) is equally credible.

Once a compound has been formed it behaves in all respects as a single word : other compounds can be formed from it, as *old clothesman* from *old clothes*, and other words can be derived from it, as *low comedian* from *low comedy*. The meanings of such secondary compounds and derivatives of compounds are determined by the original compounds, for, as they stand, many of these secondary formations are ambiguous.

There are never more than two significant parts

in a compound, although the parts may themselves be compounds. These two significant or sub-

stantive parts may be joined together without any indication of their mutual relationships, or they may be joined by relative words, as in *Jack-in-the-box*, *ten-o'clock*, *mother-in-law*, *bread-and-butter*, *good-for-nothing*, and *love-in-a-mist*.

Compounds frequently arise from the mutual adherence of the words contained in a well-known phrase or a phrase of a common type, as in " This *otherwise-in-many-ways-disastrous* war," and " The domestic autocrat, the *do-as-I-tell-you-or-get-out-of-my-house* father." Naturally, these and other compounds follow the order of the words in the sentence, and therefore the order 'of the words in compounds has varied with the variations in this order. Hence we have *down-trodden, income, outwit, upright*, and *withstand*, side by side with *come-down, knockout, lighting-up*, and *comply with*, the former being old and the latter modern.[1]

The English habit of compounding is so inveterate that the power to recognize the composite nature of many words has been lost. It is with a

[1] Coverdale's expression in his translation of Psalm cxxxviii. 2, " Thou knowest my downe syttinge and my vprisynge " (1535), may be contrasted with the natural Modern English order in this connexion.

shock of surprise that we first observe *atone* to be composed of *at* and *one*. In consequence, time, which alters all things, has quite disguised
Disguised Compounds numerous compounds and has converted them into forms as unified as their meanings. *Icicle* is for *īs-gicel* (ice-spike) ; *daisy* is " day's eye " ; *costermonger* is for *costardmonger* ; *island* is descended from *ea-land* (land in the water), the *s* having been inserted from analogy with *isle*, with which *island* has no etymological connexion ;[1] *livelihood* is from *līf-lād* (method of leading life), the *-hood* being formed on the false analogy of *manhood, boyhood,* etc. ; *neighbour* is *neah-būr* (near-dweller) ; and *stirrup* is *stig-rāp* (climbing-rope). On the other hand, some derivative words have been converted illegitimately into spurious compounds, e.g. *crayfish, causeway*, by the alteration of a suffix which had lost its meaning (from *crevice* and *causey*).

Passing from words constructed by the combination of simple words to words formed by affixing particles to a stem, we find
Derivative Words that there exists a vast number of prefixes and suffixes. Some of these particles now signify nothing ; others retain all their meaning or part of it, but are no longer used in the formation of new words ; and others, still alive

[1] Another explanation of *island*, which is Old English *igland*, is that *ig* means island, and that *land* was compounded with it.

and active, can be used when occasion demands the creation of a new term.

Examples of affixes which are now incomprehensible without special study are found in *-ard* and *-oon* or *-on*. A *bombard* was originally " a large bomb," and *balloon* meant literally " a large ball."

Affixes.

The commonest of the moribund affixes is the feminine *-ess*, which survived till the end of the eighteenth century, when *manageress* was formed (1797), and perhaps even later. It retains its force, but so feebly that other words that end in *-ess*, like *stress, ingress, mattress, fortress,* and *prowess*, are not felt to be in any way exceptional in that their meanings do not carry any feminine force. This suffix has been expelled from use by the revival of compounding; *M.P.ess* and *secretaryess* would sound unnatural, the language instinctively preferring the compound nouns or phrases *lady secretary* and *woman M.P.* Most of the old prefixes retain their meaning even if they can no longer be used for new words, and so belong to the moribund group.

The following is a list of some of the chief living affixes. A few have come down from Old English, but the majority have been borrowed either directly or indirectly from Latin and Greek, where derivation was almost exclusively employed in making new words from old material.

A. PREFIXES

1. English	. .	un–	*unenglish*	(1633)
			unemotional	(1876)
2. Latin .	. .	counter–	*counter-irritant*	(1854)
			counter-attack	(recent)
		de–	*demobilize*	(1882)
			decontrol	(recent)
		ex–	*ex-service*	(recent)
		extra–	*extramural*	(1854)
		inter–	*intercity*	(recent)
		non–	*nonconformist*	(1619)
			non-combatant	(1811)
			nonentity	(1843)
			nonskid	(recent)
			nonstop	(recent)
			nonparty	(recent)
			nonpolitical	(recent)
		post–	*post-war*	(recent)
		pre–	*pre-existence*	(1642)
			pre-war	(recent)
		pro–	*pro-German*	(recent)
		re–	*reshuffle*	(1830)
			rearrange	(1860)
		sub–	*sublet*	(1766)
			subconscious	(1832)
3. Greek .	. .	a–	*anonymous*	(1601)
			aseptic	(1859)
		anti–	*antimacassar*	(1852)
			anticyclone	(1877)
			anti-vaccination	(recent)
		hyper–	*hypersensitive*	(recent)
		neo–	*Neo-Platonist*	(1837)
			Neo-Darwinian	(1895)
		proto–	*protoplasm*	(1846)

B. Suffixes

1. English	. .	-dom	*boredom*	(1864)
		-er	*poster*	(1838)
			typewriter	(1875)
			transformer	(1883)
		-ing	*appalling*	(1842)
		-ish	*amateurish*	(1864)
		-ness	*absentmindedness*	(1879)
		-ship	*relationship*	(1744)
			airmanship	(1864)
		-y	*creepy*	(1794)
			plucky	(1826)
2. French	. .	-age	*breakage*	(1754)
			shortage	(1803)
			cleavage	(1813)
			mileage	(1816)
			mirage	(1859)
			barrage	(1868)
			garage	(recent)
3. Latin .	. .	-able	*unforgetable*	(1806)
		-al	*managerial*	(1767)
			alluvial	(1802)
		-at	*secretariat*	(1811)
		-ation	*flirtation*	(1718)
		-ful	*tactful*	(1864)
		-ive	*competitive*	(1829)
		-ment	*basement*	(1730)
			escapement	(1739)
			cantonment	(1757)
			escarpment	(1802)
			shipment	(1802)
4. Greek .	. .	-crat, -cracy	*bureaucracy*	(1848)
			bureaucrat	(1850)
			plutocrat	(1850)

<small>SUFFIXES—*continued.*</small>

Greek—*continued*	-ic, -ics	*aeronautics*	(1838)
		agnostic	(1870)
	-ism	*Czarism*	(1855)
	-ist	*dentist*	(1759)
		educationist	(1829)
		pianist	(1839)
		futurist	(1842)
		opportunist	(1881)
		faddist	(1883)
		motorist	(1896)
	-itis	*meningitis*	(1828)
		endocarditis	(1836)
	-ize‸	*modernize*	(1748)
		centralize	(1800)
		extemporize	(1817)
		macadamize	(1826)
		victimize	(1830)
5. Combined Latin	-alist, -alism	*sentimentalist*	(1793)
and Greek		*spiritualism*	(1831)
		militarism	(1864)
		sensationalism	(1867)
	-ical	*lackadaisical*	(1768)

There is still another mode of forming derivative words, which has not been included among the methods of using already-existing material, because it is not so much a method of forming new words as of altering old ones without changing the meanings. Not a few words have been shortened by the omission of the beginning, or the end. Words that have been shortened at the beginning are *phone*

<small>Shortened
Forms.</small>

(from *telephone*), *plane* (from *aeroplane*), *cycle* (from *bicycle*), *size* (from *assize*), *wig* (from *periwig*). *bus* (from *omnibus*), *mend* (from *amend*), *cute* (from *acute*), *sport*, *spend* and *stain* (from *disport*, *dispend* and *distain*). *story* (from *history*), *fence* (from *defence*), *lone* (from *alone*), *drawing-room* (from *withdrawing-room*). Examples of those whose endings have been curtailed are *how* (from *howitzer*). *nap* (from *Napoleon*), *photo* (from *photograph*), *chap* (from *chapman*), *taxi* (from *taximeter*), *hack* (from *hackney*). *cuss* (from *customer*), *bike* (from *bicycle*). A number of phrases have been condensed into words in this way, as *zoo* (from *Zoological Gardens*), *mob* (from *mobile vulgus*), *consols* (from *Consolidated Annuities*), *on tick* and *on spec* (from *on ticket* and *on speculation*). *Flu* (from *influenza*) is a word which has been shortened at both ends. There are also deliberate abbreviations of a more extreme nature, like M.P. for *Member of Parliament*, and P.C. for *postcard*.

Allied to these classes is a group of words which have been shortened owing to misapprehension, whereas the foregoing have been shortened for the sake of brevity. The word *nestling* is a derivative made from *nest* by the addition of the diminutive suffix *-ling* found in *darling* and *duckling*. The *-ing* was mistaken for the *-ing* of the present participles of verbs, and so from *nestling* a back-formation *nestle* was made, which has taken its place among English

Back-formations.

8

verbs. Similarly, the adverbs *sidelong* and *grovelling* have produced the verbs *sidle* and *grovel*. In the same way *greed* has probably been formed from *greedy*, *laze* from *lazy*, *swindle* from *swindler*, and many words which ended in -*s* or -*es* have been mistaken for plurals, a false singular being formed in consequence, as *hilt* from *hilts*, *riddle* from *riddles*, *skate* from *skates*, *cherry* from *cherries*. All these forms, although their total number is large, are exceptional.

There is not much doubt that, of the two principal and regular methods now in vogue of making new words from old material, compounding comes more naturally to the modern Englishman than derivation.

The Relative Merits of Compounding and Derivation.

Derivation is more artificial, less spontaneous. Both are opposed to the analytic tendency, but, as in most English compounds there is no formal indication of the relationship of the parts, they are the less synthetic class; being mere additions, while derivatives are organic structures, compounds fall to pieces more easily. They are easier to comprehend at first sight, since anyone who knows the meaning of the parts can at least surmise the meaning of the compound. Few compounds are deliberately made from words which have not yet become naturalized. But it is otherwise with derivatives, and derivatives deliberately formed from foreign stocks do not explain themselves. Their

meanings have to be learned by discovering their application. On the other hand, a derivative represents its meaning directly, while, as the meaning of a true compound is a simple idea, not until the meanings of the parts are unnoticed does it become a direct symbol of its meaning.

A derivative word is an exact formation : thus *dishonest* is the opposite of *honest*, and in *unmanly* the *un-* and the *-ly* have perfectly definite significance. But until usage has limited the meaning of a compound it may possess several possible meanings. The schoolboy who explained a *stowaway* to be " a person who eats too much " was therefore only following the usual method. Being ignorant of the original context, he interpreted the word in the light of his own experience.

Compounds are endowed with the same exactness if, and only if, the parts possess inflexions which show their relationship to one another. This is so in a few English compounds, such as *bridesmaid* and *steersman* ; but most are not articulated by means of inflexions. Even the few compounds that are articulated would function equally well if formed in the usual manner : *bridemaid* and *steerman* would serve our turn just as well as *bridesmaid* and *steersman*. That this is so is shown by a further consideration : the *-s* of such words having lost its significance, it can be omitted or inserted with indifference. In *tradesman, oarsman, batsman,*

*landsman, statesman, groundsman, salesman, spokes-
man* and *sportsman*, it has no function and, indeed,
in some of them it could not remain if it had its
proper significance.   Side by side with these words
we have *trademark, landlord, statecraft, groundplan,*
and *saleroom.*

The absence of inflexions in the parts of our com-
pounds enables and requires the same type of for-
mation to be used for many relations.   A *paper-bag*
is a bag made of paper, a *paper-boy* is a boy who sells
papers ; a *smoke-ring* is a ring composed of smoke ;
a *gas-ring* is a ring thfough which gas is conducted ;
a *greenfinch* is a finch which is coloured green ; a
greengrocer is a grocer who sells stuff which is
green.   Hence the absence of inflexions, though
it imposes inexactness upon compounds, is an ad-
vantage, because the number of relationships which
can be expressed is infinite, and in point of fact
the number of relationships that is so expressed is
larger than the number of case-inflexions which the
language has at any time possessed.

Many of our compounds, both those that are
the most useful as well as those that are the most

beautiful, have been coined by poets.
Figurative
Compounds. Their lack of precision renders them less

fit than derivatives for use as scientific
terms, but makes them specially suitable to poetry.
They give an opportunity to the imagination, are
s uggestive, appeal to the senses rather than to the

reason, are vivid and pictorial rather than abstract.
Since many of them are metaphorical as well as
drawn from concrete experience, they embody
and keep alive the poetry of every-day life.   We
should suffer a great loss if we were suddenly
deprived of *barefaced, backslider, underhand, wind-
fall, ladybird, potboiler, eyesore,* and *firebrand,* to
instance a few metaphorical compounds, no less
than if we had to do without the ordinary sort
which retain their literal meaning, such as *sign-
post, breakfast, nowadays, go-between, glow-worm,
self-love, clean-shaven, quick tempered, bread-and-
butter,* and *son-in-law.*   Much virtue in com-
pounds!

There is yet another source of words which
has been surprisingly fruitful of results in English.
A name, to be a complete word,
must, as the logicians phrase it, possess
both denotation and connotation;   it
must serve as an identifying label, and it must
connote some or all of the attributes of the object
or objects which it denotes. In origin, proper names
are no more than sound-labels, but they come
quickly to symbolize the objects to which they are
attached;   that is, they suggest their attributes.
From various causes, many proper names, after
their meaning has been thus enriched, are applied
to a whole class of objects, and so become com-
plete words. Names of persons and of towns

Words made
from Proper
Names.

are most commonly generalized in this way: that is to say, they are by metonymy applied to objects connected in some way with that which was all they originally denoted. *Copper* and *cypress* came from Cyprus, *currant* from Corinth, *spaniel* from Spain, *bungalow* from Bengal, *antimacassar* from Macassar, whence the oil was brought which glossed the locks of our Victorian ancestors. *Blarney* is the name of an Irish castle, *bunkum* a respelling of Buncombe in South Carolina, *canter* is a shortening of Canterbury, whither the mediæval pilgrims resorted to visit the shrine of St. Thomas, *tabby* in " Tabby cat " is said to be from Ababis a suburb of Bagdad, and *hazard* to be the name of a town in Palestine.

Names of persons are even more numerous as origins of words. The *hansom* cab was called after the name of the man who patented it in 1834; *derrick* was the name of a hangman who officiated at Tyburn at the beginning of the seventeenth century; " to *burke* (that is, smother) a discussion " originated from Burke, an Edinburgh murderer who suffocated his victims; a *dunce* was a follower of Duns Scotus, the scholastic philosopher; *bawbee* is derived from the name of an official who had to do with the coinage; *Guillotine* was a French doctor, *Silhouette* a minister of finance; *Shrapnel* was an Austrian colonel of artillery, *Boycott* an Irish landlord whose tenants refused

to serve him; *Greengage* is from Sir William
Gage, who grew that fruit; *Lynch* was the name
of an American judge, and *namby-pamby* is from
Ambrose (Philips). *Plimsolls* are called from a
great manufacturer of them, and *Mackintosh* and
Macadam were two enterprising Scotsmen whose
names have been transferred to their wares.   Names
of nations are also used in the same way : *gipsy* is
from Egyptian, *cannibal* from Carib, *slave* from Slav,
frank, franchise, etc., from Frank, and *lumber* from
Lombard.

The influence of myth and fiction has also been
considerable.   *Gamp* is from Dickens's character
of that name.   *Nickel* comes from the German *nick*,
a demon who was supposed to live underground.
According to Liddell & Scott's Dictionary, "sounds
heard by night on mountains and in valleys
were attributed by the Greek to Pan, and hence
he was supposed to be the cause of any sudden
and groundless fear, whence the word *panic*."   To
hector is from the name of Homer's Trojan hero.
Pamphlet is probably from *Pamphilet* or *Panflet*,
familiar forms of *Pamphilus de amore*, the name of
a twelfth-century poem.

From time to time one reads, in the correspon-
dence columns of newspapers and maga-
zines, letters which lay objections against
words containing parts derived from
different languages.   The writers call them hybrids.

Hybrid
Words.

They are of two kinds, hybrid compounds, such as *lifeline, commonwealth, cupboard, cross-road, gentleman, schoolfellow, corkscrew, sundial, dovetail, greyhound*, and hybrid derivatives such as *civilize* (Latin–Greek), *defilement* (Latin–English–Latin), *socialism* (Latin–Greek), *relationship* (Latin–Greek), *readable* (English–Latin).

About the mixed origin of such words there can be no dispute, but it may be doubted if there is in English any such thing as a real hybrid. Words are not compounded until they have become part and parcel of the'tongue, and when once they have been thus naturalized they should be accorded the full rights of citizens.[1] Nor are prefixes and suffixes borrowed as such from foreign languages. They are brought to our shores embedded in borrowed words, and it is not till they have fully established themselves here as useful forms that they can be detached and used for making new words. The word *militarism*, for instance, was not made by taking the stem *militar-* from Latin and the suffix *-ism* from Greek. Rather, the English word *military* was modified by the addition of a suffix that existed in many other words already English. The employment of words and affixes in that manner is the final proof that they have completely transferred their

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[1] This statement is generally true, but there is a notable exception in the Modern English words made from Greek.

allegiance. To common sense it would seem that their origin no longer matters after they have become so completely English that the popular mind can no longer detect their foreign extraction, and so familiar that nobody except a college of etymological heralds would object to their inter-marrying.

So much for the conscious and unconscious lines along which the impulse to frame new words runs. The impulse itself will doubtless never be satisfied. Supersession of old Words. Whatever economy of effort in word-making is effected by extension and shifting of meanings and by borrowing from foreign tongues, new words are incessantly made. That the impulse to create is too strong for the economical opposition to creation is shown by the number of words that have expelled old terms which to all appearance served the same purpose equally well. Thus the old word *weorpan* was discarded in Middle English for the verb *cast*, and now survives only as *warp*, in the meaning *twist*. *Cast*, although it is still used in a very large number of senses, has in its turn been displaced, in its simple meaning, by *throw*. Apparently there was no real need, in either case, for such a substitution of a new term for one already existing. Popular taste has behaved exactly like the journalists who insisted upon substituting *hara-kiri* for *suicide*, as in " The Liberal Unionist party

. . . will hesitate long before committing ' harikari ' in that fashion " (Scottish Leader, March 17, 1888, quoted in *N.E.D.*).

Something remains to be said on correct procedure in etymology. Men have always been interested in words and in their origins,

Right and Wrong Procedures in Etymology.

but it was long before they arrived at a scientific method of tracing the connexions between them. Superficial resemblances are a very unsafe guide, for many words that are quite unlike are etymologically connected, while others that are similar or identical in form are known to be unrelated. The modern science of etymology has shown what is and what is not possible, has established many a relationship and destroyed many an ancient illusion. The discovery of the laws of sound-change, that is, of observed uniformities of fact, has been a great help, and has introduced a degree of certainty which was unknown before. Conjecture has given place to reasoning. Without going into the niceties of the laws of sound-correspondence in the Aryan tongues, the connexion between *cerulean* and *hollow* may be instanced as an example. There is no formal resemblance between these two words, nor are they similar in meaning. *Hollow* is connected with *hole*, and is derived from the same root as the Old English word *helan*, to hide. An *h* in this position frequently corresponds to a *c*

or *g* in Latin, as in *g*ard(en) and *h*ort(us), *h*und(red) and *c*entum, and *hel(an)* corresponds to *cel(are)*, to hide. The noun *coelum* is related to *celo* as *hole* is related to *helan*; the adjective *coeluleus* was made from *coelum*, and subsequently changed to *coeruleus*, from which *cerulean* comes.

The numerous examples of words whose form has been changed owing to mistaken analogy are a proof of the danger of arguing from form alone. *Righteous* and *wondrous* now contain the adjectival termination *-ous*, but their original forms were *rightwise* and *wonders*. They were adverbs, and could not be used as adjectives. A mistaken analogy between them and *famous, illustrious*, etc., caused their endings to change to *-ous*, and the adjectival force of the ending has now converted them into adjectives. *Rummage* was originally an abstract noun formed from *room* and meant the hold of a ship : it has now been converted into a verb : the older form of *rubbish* is *rubbage*, and contains the same ending as is found in *village* and *voyage*.

Apart from the use of sound-laws, the only safe method is to trace step by step the actual changes that a word has undergone, by examining its existing forms till the earliest is reached.

The methods followed by the compilers of the *New English Dictionary* in tracing the origins of *elephant, calm*, and *church* will serve to illustrate

where deduction passes into probable speculation, and where probability weakens into possibility. *Elephant* has been said to be descended from the Hebrew *eleph*, an ox, *calm* from Greek καῦμα, the heat of the day, and *church* from the Latin *circus*, or *crux*. All these are either mere speculations or errors.

(1) *Elephant* can be traced with certainty, by parallel forms, as far as Greek ἐλέφας (genitive ἐλέφαντος), and beyond that nothing is certain about it. It is remarkable, too, that there was in Old Teutonic a word *ὓlfend*, which meant a camel, and that the Middle English word for *elephant* was *olifant*.[1]

(2) *Calm.*—In Middle English this is *calme*, from French *calme*. In Italian, Spanish and Portuguese there is a word *calma* which has the same meaning, and is evidently the same word.

All the rest is conjecture. *Calma* in Old Spanish means also the heat of the day. In Late Latin there is a word *cauma* which means the same, and which comes from Greek καῦμα, heat of the sun. It is therefore *possible* that *calm* is descended from καῦμα. But it is to be observed that Italian *calma* has no sense of heat.

(3) *Church.* — In Middle English *chirch* and *chirich*; in Old English *circe*, and later *cyrice*. The

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[1] Professor Ritchie informs me that this is also the Old French form.

word appears in all Teutonic tongues, and may be referred, therefore, with certainty to a lost Teutonic form *kîrika*.   Here conjecture begins.   First, its descent from *circus* or *crux* is impossible, on phonetic grounds.   It has been suggested that it comes from the Greek κυριακόν, which form is found about A.D. 300 and means a church, and this theory holds the field, as the only one which will bear examination.   But there are objections to it, which are:

(*a*) The ordinary Greek word for *church* was ἐκκλησία, and this passed into Latin as *ecclesia*, and into all the Romance languages.

(*b*) There are difficulties in the formal relations of κυριακόν and *cirice* : *v* does not usually become *i*, nor does *ov* become *e*.

Before the correct procedure was defined, ingenuity had to grope in the dark, and wandered in many curious ways.   In this manner Dr. Johnson explained *curmudgeon* to be *cœur méchant,* "an evil heart"; and *surloin* was said to mean "Sir Loin," that joint being addressed as a knight because of its noble taste.   The latter word is from *sur* and *loin*, the part above the loin, and the former is of quite unknown origin.   These methods still survive, but every such result, when unsupported by the fullest evidence, must be regarded with the closest suspicion.   What looks like a guiding star is probably a will o' the wisp.

CHAPTER VI

A SPECTATOR standing on the margin of a pond that is covered with the expanded leaves of the water-lily, and attending solely to their appearance, may be fully satisfied with their beauty. If, however, he sends his imagination below the surface, he dives into another world. Through the water struggle upwards, straight or sinuous, the stems upon which the leaves repose. The roots from which the stalks originate are placed, perhaps, upon an uneven bottom, some being short because they spring from mounds which lie just below the water, while others are so long that the light fails in the gloom where their lower ends are hidden. In the same way, current words lie on a level that conceals their history. In any past period of English, could we recover it, some parts of our present vocabulary would be missing, although in other places our ancestors had a more abundant supply than has come down to us. It seems to us,

as it must have seemed to each generation, that the store of words is sufficient for all possible needs in any department of thought and activity, yet the vocabulary continually grows, and whenever a new development of thought, an epoch-making invention, or a great change of habits occurs, a whole set of new terms has to be obtained to supply the resulting deficiency by naming the appropriate ideas and objects.

If a complete list were prepared of the dates at which words were created or borrowed, a picture of the slow and unceasing • development of our civilization would be unrolled. The Angles, Jutes, and Saxons had a relatively rude and circumscribed stock. Numerous foreign terms of the Christian religion' and civilized life appeared in Old English times, and were joined in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by a crowd of others connected with the Church. Many military terms, which have now become non-technical, were introduced by the Normans. As culture spread during the Middle Ages, the number of words indicating foreign products, plants, and animals was gradually augmented. The learning of the Arabs and the elaboration of Scholastic Philosophy produced their own crops of new terms, some of which are now in everybody's mouth, and are used by the man in the street without any suspicion crossing his mind of their learned origin, or of the concen-

tration of intellect which rendered them necessary and produced them. A new set of religious and ecclesiastical words appeared at the Reformation, and were added to those which survived from the two earlier periods of intense religious activity. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were times of great enterprise, and the vocabulary grew in accordance. Very many new literary words appeared, as well as an influx of strange new terms from abroad. When our commerce increased, it was accompanied by the creation and borrowing of the corresponding words. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the appearance of the political terms needed to express the characteristics of the modern system of government, and the refinement of social habits which took place at that period caused a further expansion. The nineteenth century brought a great number of scientific words, and also many terms belonging to social science. This and the twentieth century resemble the sixteenth in their universal activity and in the encyclopædic variety of their new creations. We are accustomed to exclaim at the material resources of our age, and to say that its opulence has given more to the ordinary man than was within the reach of the wealthiest and most powerful in the past. This material increase has been accompanied by an equal increase in the wealth of words. Although the modern man may not

think more clearly than his ancestors thought, he certainly has more to think about.

It has already been pointed out that parallel to the growth of vocabulary there is a growth in the number and variety of the meanings which many words possess, and that, were it not for this economical device, the vocabulary of Modern English, enormous as it is, would be several times as great. If we were to consider the changes of meaning that have occurred along with the introduction of new terms, the imperfect picture which the mere growth of vocabulary presents would be coloured and shaded, so that a complete representation of the development of English thought would be provided. The result would indicate with accuracy the points on which the national interest has played from time to time, till it has prepared and perfected the heritage which each of us who is born in this age is endowed with.

The Modern English vocabulary is an intimate mixture of native and borrowed words. In any

The Mixed Vocabulary of Modern English. dictionary the loans far outnumber the original stock, and it is difficult to write many sentences without using them. The tritest sentences from the most ordinary contexts, the phrases of the street corner, the posters of the daily newspapers contain elements fetched from all the corners of the globe.

The result of taking at random one word from

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each of the first thousand pages of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* is :

				Per cent.
Words of ultimate Latin	origin	.	.	48·9
,,	English	,,	.	. 28·2
,,	Greek	,,	.	. 10·8
,,	French	,,	.	. 3·7
,,	Scandinavian	,,	.	. 2·3
,,	Unknown	,,	.	. 1·3
,,	Italian	,,	.	. ·8
,,	Arabic	,,	.	. ·7
,,	Hindustani	,,	.	. ·6
,,	Celtic	,,	.	. ·4
,,	Dutch	,,	.	. ·4
,,	Turkish	,,	.	. ·2
,,	Spanish	,,	.	. ·2
,,	German	,,	.	. ·2
,,	Miscellaneous	,,	.	. 1·3

The miscellaneous words found in the first thousand (that is, one from each language) come from Russian, Chinese, Hebrew, Old Persian, North American Indian, Zulu, artificial manufacture, Modern Persian, Sanskrit, Malay, Brazilian, Haytian, and Caribbean.

After perusing this table, one might be forgiven for supposing that the vocabulary, which was once purely English, had quite lost its **The Native Element.** original character, and particularly that, as the Greek and Latin terms are in number more than double the native, English had become a mixture of Romance and Greek. But that is not so, for the most necessary words are English, and, if every word is counted every time

it is used, a very different result appears. Then the native words easily occupy the first place, and are followed at a long distance by the Latin words, which in their turn are succeeded by Scandinavian and Greek in about equal proportions. To ascertain these facts, from ten sources five passages of 100 words each have been taken, making up together a representative selection from Modern English (5,000 words). The results (in percentages) are:

	Native English.	Latin.	Scandinavian.	Greek.	Miscellaneous.	Hybrid Compounds.
1. LYRIC POETRY · Poems of To-day, First Series	87 8	6 2	3·4	2	·4	2
2. PLAY : Bernard Shaw, St Joan	87·2	8 3	3 0	1 3	·4	0
3. ESSAY : Robert Lynd	81 6	16	1·3	·3	·6	·2
4. NOVELS : T. Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles	78 2	17·4	2·4	·4	·6	1
5. G. Frankau Peter Jackson, Cigar Merchant	78 2	17·4	2·9	3	6	·6
6 HISTORY : J. McCarthy, History of our own Times	75·4	18	1·4	3·6	1	·6
7. SCIENCE . W. James, Principles of Psychology	74·4	20 6	1 6	3·4	0	0
8. LEADERS IN DAILY NEWSPAPERS : The Evening News	73 8	20·2	3 4	2 0	·6	0
9. The Times	70	25	1·2	3	·4	·4
10. TREATISE ON LAW : A. V. Dicey, Law of the Constitution	65·4	30·7	2·8	·3	·4	·4
Averages	77·2	18	2·3	1·7	·5	·3

The miscellaneous words came from French (that is, original French), Chinese, Arabic, Italian, Dutch, Hindustani, Spanish, Celtic, and unknown sources. In the 5,000 words examined there were in all 14 words of this kind, which shows how useful to us are these miscellaneous sources. Some of our commonest words, like *cot* (bed) from Hindustani, *jar* and *mattress* from Arabic, *shawl* from Persian, and *tea* from Chinese, belong to this class.

In considering loan-words it has to be remembered that, when two languages are in contact, words which are themselves borrowed **Borrowed Words.** may pass from one to the other. To assign all the words of English to their original sources is not to determine the mode of their entrance into English. French has given to English an immense number of terms, but only a few of them were made in France : nearly all came into French from Latin or Teutonic or Celtic, and many of the Latin words were borrowed from Greek. Some words have travelled through many languages before reaching English. *Silk* is found in Old English, which apparently it reached from China by a route which crossed the whole of Asia and Europe. *Paradise* came from French, thither from Latin, thither from Greek, and thither from Old Persian. *Gaol* came from Norman French, from Popular Latin, from classical Latin ; *strangle* from French, from Latin, from Greek. *Banjo* is

believed to have been originally Greek, and to have travelled by an undetermined African path into English. *Druid* is a Celtic word, but it entered English through French. *Choose* is a native word, but *choice* diverged from it before the Saxons came to England, passed into Popular Latin, and thence into French, and does not appear in English literature till 1297.

Of the 20,000 or more words found in the Old English literature that has come down to us, most disappeared at the Norman Conquest, and the abstract and metaphorical meanings of most of the remainder were lost at the same time, Norman French and Latin words supplying their places. The French *table* has superseded the Old English *tæfl*, the Latin *consideration* has replaced *ymbhoga*, and *dim*, which could be used metaphorically for " obscure " and " wicked," in such expressions as " a dim disease " and " a dim deed," was reduced to its concrete sense, this having now taken to itself new metaphorical meanings. Previous to 1066 *tide* meant " time, epoch, opportunity, hour, season of the year, festival, anniversary, and tense (of a verb) " ; and *narrowness* signified " strait, shortness of breath, anxiety, distress, and misfortune."[1] Most of the surviving Old English words are simple in type and concrete in meaning; only a few, such as *understand, out-*

Pre-Conquest Words.

[1] Sweet's *Students' Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon.*

landish, wilderness, threaten, almighty, and *witness,*
are complex and abstract. They comprise many
simple verbs—all those that form the past tense
by vowel change, and many others which use the
regular *-ed* for that purpose ; most of the preposi-
tions and conjunctions ; the pronouns and demon-
strative adjectives, the numerals below *million,* and
a large number of the most necessary nouns and
adjectives ; names of family relations such as *father*
and *mother, husband* and *wife* ; names of parts of the
body, such as *head, heart, hand, ear,* and *foot* ; of
physical phenomena, such as *cloud, rain, snow,* and
wind ; of the other commonest objects of ex-
perience ; and of ordinary qualities and actions, such
as *black, red, yellow, green, blue, white, morning,
evening, night, day, week, month, year, sun, moon,
star, east, west, morrow, gold, silver, iron,* and *steel.*
To these native Teutonic terms a number of words
from Latin and Greek, such as *circle, church, angel,
devil, cedar, post,* and *pin,* must be added, if we are
to have a list sufficiently representative of our debt
to pre-Conquest English.[1]

In the previous chapter it was stated that a
stream of words which cannot be traced to foreign
sources flows steadily into literary Eng-
lish from colloquial speech. The follow-
ing list of words of this kind which
have appeared since the end of the tenth century

Words of
Popular
Origin.

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[1] See also p. 142.

exhibits their forms, the subject-matter they cover, and the order of their appearance :

1000–1050.   Briar, flicker, fit, pebble.
1050–1100.   Dog, curse.
1100–1150.
1150–1200.
1200–1250.   Brim, amaze, blunt, average (French ?), pig, shunt, craven.
1250–1300.   Boy, bad, burglar, girl, lad, huge.
1300–1350.   Blear, basket, choke, dowdy (from dowd 1330), lump, pore, pry.
1350–1400.   Bud, bodkin, cod, flash, garish, gaze, grin, husk, patch, pat, job, plot, motley, tinkle, throb, prowl.
1400–1450.   Coarse, dud (contemporary sense did not develop till recently), glower, chirp, chop, gaunt.
1450–1500.   Boisterous, queer, rove, peep, pounce.
1500–1550.   Chink, cub, drudge, glade, jump, taunt, whim, beach, slouch
1550–1600.   Shark, caw, flaunt, grumble, flirt, frill, gloat, fog, flabby, dodge, conundrum, crease, hurry, pink, dudgeon, pier, pad, plod, hug, its, tiny, rogue, squander, clever, peer.
1600–1650.   Tussle, hanker, blight
1650–1700.   Chum, fidget, slump, wheedle, ripple, sham, banter.
1700–1750.   Flimsy, funk, fuss, hump, jam, smash, splash, tantrum, bamboozle, prim.
1750–1800.   Cantankerous, bore, flabbergasted, donkey, capsize, humbug, noodle, hoax, row, slang, caucus (New England).
1800–1850.   Chunk, bogus, flare, loaf, shindy, highfalutin, swank, slum, scrumptious, rowdy, boost, fake, fad, lorry, toffee.
1850–1900.   Fizz, grouse, boom (U.S A.), phut, slog, stunt, wangle.
1900–   Graft (U.S.A.), gadget, scrounge.

These are all words of colloquial speech for which no origin outside English, or in older English, has been found, and most of them must, till further proof is offered, be regarded as original creations.

Besides such words, popular speech contains at all times many words of foreign origin. In particular, nearly all our Scandinavian words have reached literary English through this intermediary, and the dates of entry of the later words, which must have remained in use in the spoken language since 1000 or earlier, show over what an extent of time a word can be spoken without attaining sufficient dignity to be written. A list of Scandinavian entrants constructed on the same plan as the foregoing list gives the following result:

Scandinavian Words

Before 1000. Thrall, till, them.

1000–1050. Law.

1050–1100. Fellow.

1100–1150. Die, take, their, low.

1150–1200. Thrust, she (probably a native word brought into prominence by Norse influence), boon.

1200–1250. Sky, club, call, slither, scare, fro, same, brim, raise, get, gape, cake, bank, cart, cast, meek, kid, bag, sty, want, both, theirs, rive, they, booth.

1250–1300. Skull ?, leg, fir ?, likely, stack, fling, fell (mountain), ransack, scab, boulder ?, brink.

1300–1350. Blister, rag, sling ?, scowl ?, slaver, skip, skirt, slant, spike ?, scalp, stilts ?, brae, mire, tight, taut, sway, crawl.

1350–1400. Egg, crag, squeak, scant (origin of scanty), steep,

> soak ?, bylaw, gap, gill (waterfall), shrug, stalk ?, dank ?, scrap.

1400–1450. Slut ?, raid, fluster, tag ?, firth, nasty ?.

1450–1500. Booty.

1500–1550. Skin, blether, slouch ?, flounce ?, whim, tangle, toss.

1550–1600. Billow, clumsy, force (foss), dangle ?, trash, bang.

1600–1650. Scout (deride), skid.

1650–1700. Stab, fiord,[1] slam.

1700–1750.

1750–1800. Geyser.[1]

1800–1850. Floe,[1] nag.

1850–1900. Ski.[1]

The words ascribed to Scandinavian sources do not form a well-defined class which can be marked off from the others that have risen into literary English from colloquial speech. There is, first, a large class of words (not included in this list) which have forms practically identical in all the Teutonic tongues, such as *finger*, *fare*, *oar*, *thing*, *mouse*, *mast*, *stern*, *comb*, and *horse*. Next to them is a class (also not included) consisting of Old English and Norse words, such as *stick*, *flock*, *stiff*, *slick*, and *steer*, which are identical or almost identical in form. The close similarity of others may be gathered from the likeness of pairs which both survived in Middle English, like *raise* and *rear*, *egg* and *ey*. Then comes an indefinite class of which the ascription is quite doubtful. Such are *squeal*, *squall*, *stag*, *stump*, *screech*, *stifle*, *scream*, *sift*, and *shrimp*. They may be

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[1] Direct loans from modern Scandinavian tongues.

originalEnglish echoic formations; but, though there is no evidence for the transfer, Scandinavian words exist that might be the originals of most of them. A few, in which the balance of probability is in favour of Scandinavian ancestry, such as *dank*, *stalk*, and *skull*, have been included in the list.[1] *Booty* is probably derived from both sources, and owes its form to Old English *bōt* and Norse *bȳti*.

Besides Old English and Scandinavian there are other Teutonic sources that are of importance.

Frankish, German, and Dutch.

A large number of Frankish words have come through French, and are taken in that connexion below. Many others were among the words common to all the Teutonic languages, and it is not now possible to assign their exact origin. German has never exercised much direct influence, although the total number of German words in English is not inconsiderable. *Plunder*, *swindler*, *zinc*, *kindergarten*, *carouse*, *hatchet*, *ticket*, and *waltz* are examples. At all times from the twelfth till the seventeenth century Flemish and Dutch transferred words to English. Many of our nautical words are Dutch, such as *skipper*, *yacht*, *deck*, and *sloop*; miscellaneous Dutch or Flemish words are *easel*, *landscape*, *loiter*, *frolic*, *beleaguer*, *trigger*, *switch*, and perhaps *golf*.

Ever since Old English times Greek words have been coming steadily into English through tongues

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[1] These words are distinguished by the mark " ? "

with which it was in direct contact, till now, as the table on p. 130 shows, more than 10 per cent. of the contents of the English dictionary The Influence are of Greek origin. *Canopy*, *chronicle*, of Greek. *chair*, *police*, and *catalogue* came through French; *baritone* and *grotto* through Italian; *intoxicate* through Mediæval Latin; *alms* and *bishop* through Popular Latin; *metre* has come twice into English, in the tenth century from Latin, in the fourteenth from French; *talisman* through Arabic; *buffalo* through Portuguese. All these, as they had made a long journey, arrived travel-stained, and those that came early have undergone further changes since their advent. The Greek ἐλεημοσύνη took in Old English the form *ælmesse*, and has since shortened to *alms*; ἐπίσκοπος became Latin *episcopus*, and Old English *biscep*, giving rise to the modern *bishop*. Since about the middle of the sixteenth century classical Greek has been studied in this country, and words have therefore been directly borrowed in their original Greek forms, *idea*, *delta*, *crisis*, *dogma*, *comma*, *crater*, *nectar*, *atlas*, *enigma*, *analysis*, *chrysalis*, and *synthesis* appearing in this way. Some Greek words have thus been borrowed twice. This is the reason that, e.g., *fancy* and *palsy*, which came through French, are found in English side by side with *fantasy* and *paralysis*.

In modern times a remarkable development has

occurred in the manner in which words are bor-
rowed from Greek. As they stand, Greek words
have ceased to be of much use, but that language
is now used as a quarry for many of the new terms
required to express new abstract conceptions and
scientific inventions. By a process of compounding
psychoanalysis has been made from ψυχή and
ἀνάλυσις, and *hypnotism* from ὕπνος and the
Greek abstract noun-ending -ισμος. *Telephone* is
from τέλος and φωνή, *antiseptic* from ἀντί and
σήπω. More new words are now made by
utilizing Ancient Greek in this way than by any
other means, the only serious rival to Greek as
a source of English words at the present time being
the native colloquial speech.

The following table shows the distribution of
words of Greek origin according to the time of
entrance, and distinguishes between those which
entered English through the medium of another
language, and those which came immediately
from Greek. The figures are percentages, and for
this table two hundred words have been taken at
random.

	Indirectly	Directly	Total
1150–1200	4	—	4
1200–1250	2	—	2
1250–1300	3	—	3
1300–1350	4	—	4
1350–1400	8	—	8
1400–1450	0	—	0

			Indirectly	Directly	Total
1450–1500	.	. .	5	—	5
1500–1550	.	. .	2	7	9
1550–1600	.	. .	—	13	13
1600–1650	.	. .	1	13	14
1650–1700	.	. .	—	7	7
1700–1750	.	. .	—	2	2
1750–1800	.	. .	1	6	7
1800–1850	.	. .	—	12	12
1850–1900	.	. .	—	10	10
			30	70	

There is a certain difficulty in deciding whether many Greek words should be described as coming directly, or through Latin. Before 1500, Greek being practically unknown in England, there was no direct contact. After the Renaissance modern Latin remained for more than two centuries the ordinary written language of the learned, and when a new word was formed from Greek it was put into a Latin form, e.g. Napier of Merchistoun's first use of *logarithm*. Strictly speaking, it was scarcely before the nineteenth century that English words were made directly from Greek.

As the Teutonic tribes had come into contact with Latin-speaking peoples on the Continent, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes brought with them a few Latin words, such as *camp*, *mile*, *wall*, *kitchen*, and *plant*. After the introduction of Christianity, a great many ecclesi-

And of Latin.

astical and cultural words, some of which were ultimately Greek, were transmitted to English from Popular Latin, among them being *hymn, minster, candle, cross, cell, pine* (both words), *trout, mint* (both words), *abbot* (originally Syriac), *parsley,* and *lobster.* During the Middle Ages the Latin spoken by the monks had an enormous effect upon English : *ponder, submit, create, privilege, oppose, dominion, capital,* and *implement* are samples of the hundreds of words that came at this time, either directly or through French and other languages. Mediæval Latin was a learned language based upon classical Latin, and contained many words made by the mediæval philosophers, such as : *substance, difference, accident, influence, essence, existence, quality,* and *quantity.* These have now lost their technical restriction and exact application, and have become common property. At the Renaissance the influence of classical Latin revived ; examples of the words introduced in subsequent years are : *classify, inflict, immoral, paternal,* and *frigid.* This stream has never ceased, but now flows only slowly. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century many Latin importations have been adorned with affixes which were originally Greek, as in *Socialism, minimize,* and *florist.* A few of the older and most of the many modern Latin loans preserve the classical (or pseudo-classical) form intact, even when compounded, e.g. *prejudice, facsimile, aborigine,*

veto, bonus, post-mortem, vice versa, ultimatum, in-cubus, bona-fide, tandem, alibi, miser, onus, pauper, genius, arena, tribunal, senior, lucifer, maximum, stimulus, animal, affidavit, factotum, omen, index, item, nonplus, premium, and *radius.*

Unlike English, French has an unoriginal base, in the popular Latin of the Roman provincials. This,

And of
French. however, acquired some Celtic words, and to it the Franks added a strong infusion of Teutonic terms. Since the Frankish invasion French has come into contact with many tongues, and, like English. has added words of its own. Accordingly, in the words that French has given to English are to be found words of all these kinds. Examples of French words that are ultimately Latin are *gallery, barrister, poison, feat* ; of ultimate Celtic origin, *car, career, carpenter, garter, Druid, gravel, mutton, quay,* and *truant* ; of ultimate Teutonic, *war, guard, warrant, garage, harness, bacon, abandon, gain, rascal,* and *choice. Grimace, baggage, dupe, screw, garbage, gauze, gorgeous, barren, bribe, badge,* and *shanty,* through Canadian French, are loans that were apparently original French words. The origin of *touch* and *harness,* which came through French, but appear in all Romance tongues, is quite unknown.

The influence of Norman French was not exerted immediately after the Norman Conquest, because the conquered race was held in separation and

subjection. It was not till the two peoples became one that borrowing went on rapidly. The years when it was most frequent were from the middle of the thirteenth till the end of the fourteenth century. At that time French words were borrowed about seventy times as frequently as they are now. Words of all sorts were borrowed, but perhaps legal terms were the most notable class. The special law dialect that was developed gave such words as *judge, culprit, mortgage, distress, plaintiff, assize, estate,* and *tenure* to English.[1]

The pronunciation of an imported term is generally an attempt to reproduce its sound in the tongue to which it belongs, the result being an approximation rather than an exact copy. In *garage* (gará:ʒ), for example, the vowels and consonants have, approximately, their French sound, while the strong accent on the second syllable is an English addition. But, once a word

The pronunciation of borrowed Words

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[1] Professor Jespersen gives the following table to show the relative strength of the French influx at different periods. For a random 1,000 French words in *The New English Dictionary,* the earliest quotations given in the dictionary arrange themselves as follows (*Growth and Structure of the English Language,* p. 93):

Before 1050	. 2	1301–1350	. 120	1601–1650	. 69
1051–1100	. 2	1351–1400	. 180	1651–1700	. 34
1101–1150	. 1	1401–1450	. 70	1701–1750	. 24
1151–1200	. 15	1451–1500	. 76	1751–1800	. 16
1201–1250	. 64	1501–1550	. 84	1801–1850	. 23
1251–1300	. 127	1551–1600	. 91	1851–1900	. 2

is in the language, it follows the same sequences of sound-change as other words. The mediæval French *raison* became ré:zɔn in Middle English, and then changed to rí:zn, just as the native *sea* (se:) changed to si:. But French itself has changed, and therefore some of the French loans in English preserve forms that are obsolete in modern French. Such words as *charge* and *chase* retain the Old French pronunciation of ch(t∫), this having become ∫ in more modern times; and the English spelling and pronunciation of *foible* are the same as the older spelling and pronunciation of the French *faible*.

Hence words introduced from French before the seventeenth century have completely lost their French character, while those that came later usually preserve, to a greater or less extent, traces of their foreign origin. *Blanc-mange* (bləmɔ'ndʒ), *envelope*, in one of its pronunciations (ɔ'nvelo:p), and *caprice* are examples. The pronunciation of a few English words has been affected by modern French: for example, *machine* and *police* (po:li:s). *Police* was introduced in the fourteenth century from French, and was till comparatively recent times pronounced *pó:lis*, as it still is in popular Scotch and Irish.

Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian are based upon Latin in the same way as French; and, in their connexion with English, they acted as channels in

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the same manner, though, as their contact with it was less constant, their influence has been much less potent. Among the common words that English has obtained from Spanish and Portuguese are *parasol, stevedore, embargo, negro, fetish, comrade, caste,* and *tank*[1] (these being originally Latin), *stampede* (Teutonic), *cockroach* (original), *crimson* (Arabic), and *cigar* (original). The Spanish words *chocolate, cocoa,* and *tomato* were borrowed from Mexican, *hammock, cannibal,* and *hurricane* are of Caribbean origin, and *canoe, potato,* and *tobacco* come ultimately from the language of the Indians of Hayti. There is also a very considerable number of names of rarer products which can be traced ultimately to African and South American languages, and which entered our language by the same route. From Italian have come direct *charlatan, bombast, fiasco, manifesto, profile, stanza, motto, bandit, parapet, niche,* and *moustache.*[2] Several of these were originally Latin, but *moustache* came into Italian from Greek, and *fiasco, traffic, risk, calibre, race* (nation), *niche,* and *fracas* (all except the first of which came through French) are probably original Italian. Other Italian words that have entered English by

Spanish, Portuguese, Italian.

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[1] There is some evidence that *tank* may have come into English by way of Hindustani through Portuguese from Latin.

[2] Spanish had, apparently, an equal share of the credit for sending us *moustache* and *calibre.*

the same route as *traffic* are *duel*, *populace*, *brave*, and *attack*. Many words belonging to music, art, and literature, such as *canto*, *falsetto*, *piano*, and *solo*, are of Italian importation.

Seeing that the English have so long lived side by side with men of Celtic race, and have also borrowed words from other races that had established a less intimate contact, it is not surprising that there has been very considerable interchange of words between English and Celtic. The contact, indeed, has introduced not a little difficulty into the question, for the Welsh, Irish, and Gaels have borrowed many words from English, and it is sometimes hard to know to which language a word originally belonged. It appears likely that the flow of words was almost entirely into Celtic from English. The Gaelic *mōd* and probably the Welsh *pwll*, for example, were borrowed from English *mōt* and *pōl*, and *brae*, which was long thought to be Gaelic, is recognizable as the Norse form of *brow*. Probably because the Britons, like the Gauls, were so Romanized that they spoke Popular Latin almost entirely, very few Celtic words passed into Old English : in fact, apart from place-names, very many of which are still Celtic, there is not a single word in Old English which can with certainty be traced to Welsh, Erse, or Gaelic. *Bard*, and perhaps *flannel* and *brisk*, are Welsh; *clan*, *cairn*, *loch*, and *claymore* are Gaelic ;

Celtic.

and *galore*, *banshee*, and *hooligan* (a proper name) are Irish. Most of these have come into English in comparatively recent times, and by more or less artificial means. The number of Celtic words that have been borrowed indirectly through French seems to be actually larger than the number of those which have been acquired directly.

Turning now to non-Aryan sources, we come upon groups of words of very various kinds. Most of them denote foreign products, but not *Miscellaneous Sources.* a few of them have crept into use as necessary terms of everyday life. The first group to be considered belongs to the Semitic tongues. *Jot, amen, elephant,* and *cider* appear to be Hebrew. Arabic has given us an extraordinarily large number of words, both names of products and places, and learned words made by the mediæval Arabian scholars. Among them are *almanac, amber, algebra, admiral, cipher, zero, mummy, sugar, syrup, cotton, alcohol, coffee, sofa, tariff,* and *assassin.* To Slavonic we owe *slave, vampire,* and *howitzer*; to Persian, *tulip, shawl, pyjama, orange, lemon* (Arabic ?), *caravan, bazaar, scarlet,* and *azure* ; to Turkish, *horde* and *bosh.* *Oasis, tiger, paper, lion, pyramid,* and *rice* come from Greek, but were probably of Eastern or Egyptian origin.

English occupations, trade, and rule in India have inevitably formed a medium through which yet another current has set towards the speech of these

islands.   To Hindustani belong *cot*, *dinghy*, *jungle*, *khaki*, and *loot*; to Bengali, *bungalow*; to Malay, *gong*, *bamboo*, and *gingham*.   Lastly, we must not omit the scattered words of even more unexpected or remote origin, such as *moccasin* and *mugwump*, from North American Indian; *boomerang* and *kangaroo*, from Australian; *taboo* and *tattoo*, from Polynesian sources; *pal* from Romany; and perhaps *bizarre* from Basque.

In Modern English, admixture of words has proceeded as far as it is possible to conceive that it can go.   Also, as the previous chapter The Ideal of a Pure Vocabulary. shows, there are many hybrid compounds and hybrid derivative words.   If the ideal language be one that has made all its words from its own resources, English is now as imperfect as any tongue could become, and the belief that this is so appears from time to time.   That is ridiculous, since the zeal for a pure and unmixed vocabulary can scarcely go so far as to propose to remodel the entire language.   *Dissimilar* would have to give place to *unlikesome*, which would clash with *unlikely*; we should be deprived of *catastrophe* and *misfortune* and reduced to *mishap*.   No considerable body of persons has ever proposed to go to this length, but serious proposals are sometimes made to replace isolated terms by Teutonic formations, such as *word-hoard* for *vocabulary*. Such attempts are generally grounded on a too

enthusiastic nationalism rather than on sound linguistic principles, their promoters being blind to the fact that Modern English is in its very essence a mixture of terms.

There is, however, a legitimate field for the exercise of a censorship over words. That a loan is the best way of supplying a real need is the only sound reason for borrowing a word. To import such a foreign term as the Russian *ukase* for *order* is absurd and harmful, for it introduces a word incomprehensible to most people, although a synonym which everybody understands already exists in the language. To this affectation the English people have shown themselves particularly prone; many Latin importations are, and always have been, nothing more than book words, synonymous with Saxon terms, never entering speech, and understood only by the learned.

On the other side there is much to be said. It is impossible to imagine that the vocabulary would be as fertile as it is if all Modern English words had had to be constructed from Teutonic roots with no reinforcements except the native creations of modern times. Moreover, had English been obliged to rely solely on itself, the structure of its words would have been quite different; either derivative words would be much more numerous and more complicated, or many long compounds would have had to be made. Both these tendencies

have existed in England in the past, and have, happily, been checked before they reached an excessive development. Modern English, in short, owes its simplicity of word-structure to its readiness in borrowing. At the present moment it appears to be less willing to do so than in the past; and, concurrently, the habit of compounding native terms, and of making new compounds from Greek roots, has greatly increased.

CHAPTER VII

WRITING in 1795 and following custom, Lindley
Murray defined English Grammar as " the art of
Two Opposed
Views of
Grammar. speaking and writing the English lan-
guage with propriety." A century and
a quarter later *The Report on the Teach-
ing of English in England* lays down that " Grammar
is a description of structure, nothing more " (page
284). To the former it was a practical pursuit,
an art ; to the writers of the latter it is a set of
definitions based upon facts ascertained by obser-
vation, a body of deductions drawn from experi-
ence. Whence arose the discrepancy between these
two opinions ?

The Greeks, who first used the term Grammar,
meant by it the study of all the facts of a language
as they stand. The modern view, therefore, which
is represented by the definition in the English Re-
port, agrees with their use of the term, except that
it is narrower. Even so late as the nineteenth
century the word Grammar had a much wider
significance than this definition attaches to it, for
it included the pronunciation, meaning, and

structure of words, sources of vocabulary, spelling, versification, phonetics, and figures of speech, as well as accidence and syntax.

In the Middle Ages linguistic study was divided into Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric. By Dialectic the Greeks had meant practice in analysing and examining the truth of statements and arguments, and by Rhetoric the principles of oratory. In mediæval times each of these terms had changed its meaning greatly. Latin was supposed to be the only language worthy of study, and it was studied for a practical end. Grammar now signified the study of Latin usages ; Dialectic had crystallized as formal logic, especially the intensive study of the various species of syllogism ; and Rhetoric had been extended to embrace the theory of the effective and elegant employment of Latin, whether in speech or in writing. The purpose of grammatical study was to become acquainted with formally correct Latin, of Dialectic to avoid and detect fallacies in deductive reasoning, of Rhetoric to use Latin words with force, and to have at command a good Latin style. Rhetoric corresponded roughly to what we understand by the study of Latin literature, and Grammar to our study of the Latin language. From this, by an easy transition of thought, as Latin was a fixed and standard form, Grammar came to be regarded as the art of writing Latin in that form.

When, in the later sixteenth century, English Grammar was born, it was but natural that it should take from Latin Grammar its whole outlook. The linguistic principles which had been discovered in Latin were applied to English, the conception of language which the study of Latin had produced was implicitly assumed to be valid for English, and to English Grammar was ascribed a practical value similar to that which Latin Grammar had for the mediæval Latin scholar.

Although it was natural, it was none the less disastrous that the earliest writers of textbooks of English Grammar should take as their **Contrasts between Latin and English.** models the Grammars of the Latin tongue with which they were familiar. The notions appropriate to Latin are largely inapplicable to Modern English, because the structure of Latin is very different from the structure of English. In consequence, from the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, English was stretched and tortured upon the bed of Procrustes. Gender and concord are essential features of Latin, and therefore were discovered in English, which possesses scarcely a trace of them. Further damage was done because, while Latin is a dead language, English is a living speech, which is still growing and developing, and which has not yet arrived at its final form. The rules of Latin can be appealed to as canons of correctness, to which anyone who

aspires to write good Latin must conform, and it was and is the custom to do so: any departure from these rules is an indisputable error. The transference of this practice to English stamped with ignominy the new and useful forms which English, being a living tongue, is incessantly evolving. It was not perceived that the rules of English are not final, and that they should be merely statements of the habits of the majority of English speakers and writers, or of the best among them.

In the days when Latin and Greek were universally regarded by scholars as the models of linguistic perfection, the modern European languages appeared to be the results of degeneration from more perfect forms. In the French *aimer*, for example, the ending of the Latin *amare*, with its bold and distinctive vowel, and its two syllables, has been, as the grammatical expression still goes, weakened or corrupted into *-er*. Relatively to their originals, Italian, Spanish, and French possess fewer terminations, and these terminations are less distinctive. The same process has been undergone by English. Old English is a language whose structure, though simpler, belongs to the same stage of linguistic development as Latin. In Middle English the numerous terminations were considerably reduced in number, and in variety of sound. In Modern English most of them have quite disappeared. The conclusion was drawn, the more elaborate the more

perfect. But that need not be so. The fallacy in the conclusion is caused by neglecting to remember that language is only a means, a set of audible symbols whose purpose is to represent and communicate ideas. To secure a given end the simplest means is the best. Now, the average English sentence is no more ambiguous than the average Latin sentence. English has a larger vocabulary than Latin, the wealth of ideas expressible by modern Englishmen is greater than that possessed by the Romans, and English is more flexible, more capable ᴏf expressing subtle distinctions, than was Latin. It is pardonable to conclude that English, being a simpler means of securing a higher end, is superior to Latin. The elaborate linguistic structure which Latin and Greek exemplify is but a stage in the development of the relatively simple forms of which the modern languages of Western Europe are examples.

The remarkable linguistic conservatism generated by the study of Latin is curiously illustrated by the inconsistency average with which the edu- *Grammatical Innovations.* cated man regards additions to the vocabulary and grammatical innovations. The latter he invariably opposes, but he is very often ready to adopt and use new words. In structural changes he sees evidence of decay, and their employment he considers to be a sign of defective education, while the introduction of a new word, if it is

borrowed from a foreign language, seems to him to be a proof of lively intelligence and liberal culture.

It is by means of such innovations in structure, as much as by additions to the vocabulary, that Modern English has developed. Old English, with its terminations for the cases of nouns, for each of the three genders of adjectives, for the tenses of the verb, and for each person, singular and plural, has been gradually transformed, during the course of nine hundred years, into the almost flexionless tongue that we speak ; and every stage of the simplification has brought an increased capacity to express ideas. We can scarcely agree, however, that every innovation is necessarily an improvement, and therefore we are compelled to inquire what principles should be applied to test each new candidate for acceptance. Two examples will suffice for this : the first, the system of Continuous Tenses, is no longer an innovation ; the second, the Split Infinitive, has not yet won respectability, and may never succeed in doing so.

In Old English the Indicative Mood had two Simple Tenses, a general Present Tense and a general Past Tense. The Present Tense could do duty for the Future as well as for the Present.[1] *Ic bind* was equivalent to " I bind," " I do bind," " I am binding," " I shall bind," " I shall be binding " ; and " *Ic bond* " was equivalent to " I bound," " I

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[1] The compound future with *shall* had already begun to appear, but was rare.

did bind," " I was binding." The Active Continuous Tenses with *be* developed first, and were followed in quite recent times by the Passive Continuous Tenses, " I am being bound," " I shall be bound," " I shall have been bound," etc. Such forms as " I shall be bound," however, are both momentary and continuous in meaning; there is in them no such distinction as that which is made by the forms " I shall bind " and " I shall be binding." The reason that the distinction has not fully developed in the passive is that the verb *to be* is already used there. In a passive continuous tense the verb *to be* has to be used twice and in two different senses. It is so used in such a form as " I am being bound," and although *am* and *being* are dissimilar in form, no doubt this and such modes of expression were at first felt to be clumsy. Hitherto the language has stopped short at this point, and has refused to entertain tenses where allied forms of the same verb would have to be used together. Forms like " I shall be being bound " are as yet inadmissible. But they have already appeared, as in " The issue over which the General Election is supposed *to be being fought* " (*Schoolmistress*, 1924). Whether in the future they will come into general use is doubtful, on account of their extreme awkwardness. The language appears to have advanced in this direction as far as it can with decorum go.

For its indicative tenses, Active and Passive, Modern English has twenty-seven tense-forms : Old English had only six, and Latin had only ten, in spite of its wealth of inflexions. We can fairly claim that English has gained greatly by being able to make all these tense-distinctions.

The constantly recurring discussions on the Split Infinitive offer a good instance of the manner in which points of grammatical detail are debated. There are four possible lines of argument—historical justification, the authority of writers, euphony, and utility. (1) Historically the Split Infinitive is indefensible. The infinitive was originally a verbal noun governed by the preposition *to* in the dative case, and while it remained such it was impossible to interpose an adverb. Before the endings disappeared, such a sentence as " It is time *to immediately put* the work in hand " was never made. There was no temptation to make it. But the infinitive has quite lost this character now. (2) The weight of authority is divided. The Split Infinitive has been used by writers of standard repute since the sixteenth century, as in

> Alas ! what boots it with incessant care
> To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,
> And *strictly meditate* the thankless Muse ?
>
> *Lycidas*, ll. 64–6.

But it has been comparatively rare, and there are authors, such as Shakespeare and Gibbon, who

never used it. (3) The argument drawn from euphony—that it does not sound well—needs to be resolved. So far as this means that it does not sound well because it is not consistent with ordinary usage, the argument avoids the question at issue, whether the new usage is to be accepted for the future. This is the general meaning, because few sounds or groups of sounds are ugly or beautiful in themselves. So far as a new usage involves any clumsiness, like the repetition in juxtaposition of the same word in two different senses, it has considerable validity. But the Split Infinitive does not come under this condemnation. (4) The ruling test must always be utility; the other tests merely strengthen or weaken this, and cannot prevail over it. If cases occur where the Split Infinitive is superior to any other arrangement by being less ambiguous, in those cases it is justified. In the sentence quoted above it is unnecessary; to place *immediately* at the end does not in any degree impair the sense. But expressions undoubtedly occur in which it is less ambiguous than any other order of words would be. If, in " He was unwilling to wholly manufacture new goods," *wholly* is put in front of the *to*, it tends to adhere to *unwilling*; if it is placed after *manufacture* it attaches itself to *new*. The motive which caused its insertion in the middle of the infinitive was sound, a desire to protect the adverb, and to

associate it irretrievably with the word which it modifies, and this is the only way of so doing.

There is one thing worse than an unnecessarily split infinitive, which is an infinitive unskilfully unsplit by placing the adverb in a position where it forms a wrong attachment, e.g. " Staffordshire County Council is to ask the ministry seriously to consider whether the policy of slaughtering cattle should be continued " (*Daily News*, 1924), and in " You are requested kindly to shut the gate." Very often the split infinitive can only be avoided by placing the adjective ·where it will either form a wrong attachment or interfere with the natural movement of the sentence. The latter alternative has been adopted in " The unit was permitted to retain officially a pet animal " (*Daily News*).

To generalize, in determining the validity of forms of expression in Modern English, the authority of writers and weight of tradition are of no avail if they conflict with considerations of utility. If the new form supplies a felt need, it is by that fact fully justified. The distinction between *shall* and *will*, by which the former expresses futurity where the latter expresses determination, and vice versa, is a subtle difference which is of the greatest convenience. Yet no justification can be found for the usage in sixteenth-century English : in Shakespeare *shall* and *will* are

Justification of New Idioms.

synonymous; either could then be used in place of the other, without affecting the sense.

It follows still more forcibly that arguments drawn from Latin are irrelevant. English usages are essentially different from Latin usages. The English grammarian has to take the language as it is at a given time; and his duty is to describe the usages prevalent at that time. The usages of no foreign tongue, the English usages of no past time, have any weight in determining what is or what shall be correct English in the present and future, if they are opposed to current forms which fulfil a useful purpose.

The termination of a sentence with a preposition is a case in point. This is frequently stigmatized. But " I don't want to " and " Who did you come with ? " are natural and perfectly good English. An attempt to follow a rule that an English sentence should not end in a preposition will cause sentences to be recast which need no recasting. To avoid the preposition at the end in " He hoped that the accused would be able to maintain himself without recourse to what he had been driven to," the phrase *without recourse to* would have to be altered; for merely to move the preposition produces " He hoped that the accused would be able to maintain himself without recourse *to to* what he had been driven," which is inferior in form to the original sentence. In conversation

such sentences are of constant occurrence, and even such a string of prepositions as is gathered in "Whatever did you choose that book to be read out of to for ? " (a well-known comic instance) would probably pass unnoticed. Modern English contains a very large number of compound verbs which end in a preposition, and therefore it must frequently happen that the preposition will be the word which will naturally terminate the sentence.

The history of English grammar shows that the Latinizing grammarian has been at work upon the English language for three centuries.

Early Grammars of English When the phrase " English grammar " was first used it meant " Latin grammar written in English." The two earliest extant grammars of the English language were written in Latin. The first is entitled *Grammatica Anglicana praecipue quatenus a Latina differt auctore P. Gr.*, and dates from 1594. P. Gr., whoever he was, evidently felt bewildered by the magnitude of the task he had set himself. He began in the ordinary manner then followed in grammars of Latin, by describing and classifying terminations, but soon broke off, so that the book is a mere fragment. The second, Alexander Gil's *Logonomia Anglica* (1619), is a full description of English, divided into Grammar of Letters, Etymology (that is, Accidence), Syntax, and Prosody. Gil, who was High Master of St. Paul's School, was

a modernist, and he had a great admiration for English.[1] He saw that English has no gender in the sense that Latin has a gender.

The earliest English grammar written in English that has come down to us is Charles Butler's (1633). It follows the order of topics traditional in Latin grammars, and defines grammar as the art of writing and speaking well. But it omits gender, and includes a chapter on accent. It is written in a phonetic script. Butler did not attempt to deal with Syntax.

It is remarkable that many men eminent in other ways have written grammars of English. Ben Jonson, the dramatist, made one which was published after his death. Dr. Samuel Johnson prefixed one to his Dictionary in 1755. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, in 1761, William Hazlitt the essayist in 1808, Cobbett the politician in 1817, all wrote English grammars.

The English Grammar made by Ben Jonson is in both Latin and English, and follows the model of Latin grammars in most respects. Jonson attempted to decline English nouns, and distinguished

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[1] " I venture to assert that of all the languages now used by mankind none is more polished or more elegant, or more capable of expressing ideas, or subtler in the distinctions which it can make than is the English tongue." (Lingua Anglica, qua nulla, audeo dicere nulla, earum quae nunc mortalibus in usu sunt, aut cultior, aut ornatior, aut ad omnia animi sensa explicanda aptior, aut facundior invenietur.)

six genders! He considered the spoken language
to be more important than the written. " Grammar
is the art of true and well speaking a language,"
he said ; " the writing is but an accident." [1] He
held the opinion that in the spelling of English
words the accent should be indicated, and in this
was undoubtedly correct. [2]

Even in the early part of the eighteenth century,
when the classical bias was at its strongest, there
were some who dissented from it. Disbelief in the
argument, which is advanced even to this day, that
complete skill in the use of English can be obtained
through the study of Latin was the motive which
called forth an English grammar published by
Henry Jones in 1724. In the Preface to this book
we read : " The common method practised for the
attainment of a competent knowledge of English
is to put children to learn Latin, by which
means scarce one in twenty reaps the intended
benefit."

No one could truthfully accuse Joseph Priestley
of clinging intentionally to tradition in his general
life. Nevertheless, though he was a zealous teacher
of English, and though his book was designed by

[1] Ch. i.

[2] " The accent . . . hath not yet obtained with us any signe,
which notwithstanding were most needful to be added " (ch. vii).

Examples of words which because of their inconsistency must
be of special difficulty to foreigners are : *véstige, prestíge, málice,
políce.*

its author to give " a view of the genuine and established principles of the English language," it is quite conventional. He showed the influence of the classical ideas by including gender, and by defining Grammar as " the art of using words properly." Johnson's Grammar resembles Priestley's, but omits gender.

At the end of the eighteenth century the shackles of Latin were to all appearance being fixed more immovably upon English by each succeeding writer. But there were exceptions. In his etymological discussions entitled *The Diversions of Purley* Horne Tooke wrote: " Figure apart, in our language the names of things without sex are also without gender. And this . . . because with us the relations of words to each other are denoted by the place or by prepositions: which denotation (in Latin) usually made a part of the words themselves, and was shown by cases or terminations. This contrivance of theirs made the terminating genders of adjectives useful." Horne Tooke himself wrote no Grammar of English, but William Hazlitt came under his influence and applied his principles. Hazlitt declared that in his Grammar the genius of our language was specially attended to. This was no empty declaration: he honoured it in his performance. His book consists of only two parts —Etymology and Syntax. Spelling, pronunciation, and versification he dismissed as outside his

province. Two brief extracts from the preface will serve to show his attitude. " It is a circumstance which may at first excite some surprise," he remarked, " that there has hitherto been no such thing as a real English Grammar. We shall, however, no longer wonder at this circumstance, when we recollect that the Latin Grammar was regularly taught in schools several centuries before any attempt was made to introduce the study of the mother tongue : and that even since some attention has been paid to this latter, the study of the learned languages still having the precedence, our first notions of Grammar are necessarily derived from them. . . . The following is an attempt to explain the principles of the English language such as it really is. *We have endeavoured to admit no distinction which but for our acquaintance with other tongues we should never have suspected to exist.* The common method of teaching English Grammar by transferring the artificial rules of other languages to our own . . . occasions much trouble and perplexity. . . . We might refer particularly to the accounts given in the most approved and popular Grammars of the genders and objective case of English nouns." Hazlitt defined Grammar successfully thus : " The Grammar of any particular language (as the English) describes the peculiar structure and idiom of that language."

Seeing that Hazlitt's book was really revolu-

tionary in its principles, it is perhaps not strange that it should have had so little influence upon its successors; for most grammarians have not exactly been revolutionaries. Of all the most " approved and popular " grammars Lindley Murray's has been the most influential, and it was undoubtedly the book to which Hazlitt referred. The first edition of this famous treatise appeared in 1795, thirteen years before Hazlitt's. It was in the old evil classical line. Lindley Murray laid down rules of correct English to which all writers must conform, and many of which the most famous authors had (by anticipation) broken. These rules were not all derived from English usage. Some were of classical origin; others were—apparently—a special revelation to Lindley Murray. In his definition of English grammar as " the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety " he meant by propriety conformity to various arbitrary standards of taste. In Grammar he included Prosody, Spelling, and much Rhetoric.

The Grammars most used in the schools of to-day are the lineal descendants of Lindley Murray's. They are based upon similar principles, but are superior to it in having come under the influence of the new science of comparative philology, and in being written with a more accurate and adequate knowledge of the origin and development of English. Derivation,

Modern School Grammars.

word-borrowing, and historical grammar are frequently incorporated in them.

At the commencement of the present century, the Interim Committee on Grammatical Terminology was formed to attempt some simplification of the terms used in Grammar books, and to try to find some common set of terms which would suit English, German, French, Latin, and Greek equally well. After the Committee had reported, the most popular Grammars were revised, and the new terminology was introduced into them, and the latest Grammars have been written in these terms. But, on the whole, the principles remain the same. It was not the intention of the Committee to restate the principles of English Grammar, and they did not attempt to do so. They accepted most of the older categories and gave them simpler names. Their interest was pedagogical rather than philological. In consequence, their terms and categories do not really fit English.

The final result of this course of development is that the actual structure of English is unknown to people at large. Very little has been done to describe its real features in suitable terms. What is needed is a description of the main laws of the structure of current English, couched in terms which are sufficiently precise.

English grammar is the description of the structure of English as from examination we find that

it is, not as—from knowledge of the past—we know that it was, nor as—because of preconceived notions derived from the study of extraneous subjects—we believe that it ought to be.

It is therefore inadmissible to alter a sentence in order to treat it grammatically. In "Every man for himself," the subject is "Every man" and the predicate is "for himself." It is equally inadmissible to start from the *a priori* idea that every sentence must contain a verb, and, as the expression goes, to "understand" some such words as "must fend," so that the sentence becomes "Every man (must fend) for himself." "One man one vote," "He felt a fool," "No wonder," "The more the merrier" (proverbial), "Sinbad picked up a diamond the size of a pigeon's egg" (colloquial), "A place foretold should be" (Milton), — all these are good sentences, although not framed in the commonest form. It is illogical to reduce them, before analysing, to "One man (should have) one (and only one) vote," "He felt (himself to be) a fool," "(It is) no wonder," "In proportion as there are more, they will be merrier," "Sinbad picked up a diamond (which was of the same size as) a pigeon's egg," and "A place (of which it was) foretold (that it) should be."

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VII

THE VALUE OF THE STUDY OF LATIN FOR WRITERS AND SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

As there are so many references in this chapter to Latin, and as the paramount importance of studying Latin has been and is so strenuously asserted by its partisans and denied by its opponents, it may be worth while to summarize here the effects that the study of Latin may reasonably be expected to have upon English. The subject-matter of Latin literature is not in question : it can be reached through translations, although the finer spirit of a great book cannot be conveyed by a translation. Little good can be expected from a study which is not pursued far enough, and it may be roundly asserted that the great majority of boys and girls who study Latin in Secondary schools stop before they have reached a point at which their studies can be profitable to them. They would be better speakers and writers of English if they had devoted to it the time spent on the truncated Latin course. The question is not of them, any more than of subject-matter. It is, What value for English have the studies of that minority who pursue Latin through a sufficient course, to a natural conclusion ?

In so far as a foreign language coincides with

the native tongue, to study one is to study the other. To this extent the study of Latin is no more than a special method of studying English.

A great part of the English vocabulary is of Latin origin, and can scarcely be better studied than as part of Latin. On the other hand, if this part is unduly emphasized, if the non-Latin vocabulary (the words of Teutonic and popular origin, and their structure) is neglected, an erroneous view of the English vocabulary will be produced.

The structure of Latin is opposed to the structure of English, and, if the structure of English is known, it will be thrown into relief by the study of Latin grammar. But if it is neglected, and if the structure of Latin is learnt, there will be a tendency to assume that English has features which are, in fact, peculiar to Latin. In " What can they know of English who only English know ? " there is some force : there is far more in " What can they know of English who only Latin know ? " The study of any language, native or foreign, can induce a habit of attending to words, and an idea that it is necessary or desirable to be correct in writing and speech. But to translate good Latin into bad English will teach neither good English nor an ideal of good English.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE OF MODERN
ENGLISH

LANGUAGE being the expression of thought in words, every sentence may be looked at as thought or as words, as material or as form of expression. The description of the structure of English, which is the province of grammar, is obliged to take account of both these aspects. Try as we may to confine grammar to the formal aspect, we find ourselves obliged to include the other. It is impossible to describe the forms, functions, and relations of English words and sentences without including in the description some principles closely allied with the laws of thought. Indeed, in English grammar, seeing that English possesses few inflexions, the formal part is relatively small.

Of the traditional parts of English grammar the following are purely ideal[1]: the analysis of the simple sentence into subject and predi-

Universal
Categories. cate ; the description of sentences as principal and subordinate ; the classification of sentences as statements, questions and com-

[1] Professor Jespersen has given the name " notional " to these principles. (Society for Pure English, Tract No. 16)

mands, and as positive and negative; the notions of past, present, and future time; the different relations in which things can stand to one another; the distinctions between proper and common nouns, and between concrete and abstract nouns. Although some languages have not advanced so far as others in making distinctions, this part of grammar may be regarded as universal.

Less general than these principles, but yet closely connected with universal modes of thought, are the various functions of words, which we call Functional Categories. the parts of speech; the various modes in which an action can be regarded (moods and voices of the verb); the applications of past, present, and future time to the different modes of action and types of existence, which produce the tenses of the verb; the notions of singular and plural; and the ideas of comparison. It might be thought that this second set of principles is as general as the first. Such is not the case; e.g. the ideas of singular and plural as exhaustive categories are not common to all languages; Greek and Gothic have three numbers, Singular, Dual, and Plural. In Latin an Intransitive Verb was regarded as akin to the Passive Voice; in English it is regarded as allied to the Active Voice: the Latin equivalent of " The earth moves " is " Terra movetur," which also means " The earth is moved."

All these ideal and functional distinctions could,

conceivably, be paralleled by changes in the forms of words. In the classical languages such a parallelism had been carried to great lengths; in Modern English it has almost died away. Modern English has, however, a few remains of the ancient inflexional system, and by new means, especially by auxiliary verbs and prepositions, and by utilizing the order of words in the sentence, it has elaborated new methods of indicating ideal and functional differences. The study of these constitutes the third department of grammar, and is what is meant by formal grammar in the strict sense.

Formal Grammar.

The features which formal English grammar describes are, of course, peculiar to English. It cannot be assumed that even their underlying principles operate in other tongues. The rule that the subject of the sentence and the verb agree formally in number is common to Latin and English, but it is not completely true in Greek, where a plural neuter noun was followed by a singular verb. Indispensable in Latin, it could easily be discarded by Modern English. It is possible, too, to conceive a language in which, if the subject is plural, almost every word in the sentence will take the sign of the plural. Again, although sentences can be classified as Statements, Questions, or Commands, it is possible to conceive a language in which there is no formal difference corresponding to these

three types. We can say " Go," " Are you going ? "
and " You are going," but, by an appropriate in-
tonation, we can make the words " You are going "
do duty for all three types.

Broadly considered, words may be divided, ac-
cording to use, into two great classes, substantives
and relatives. Substantives have a sig-
nificance in themselves. Their specialized
functions enable them to be subdivided
into nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, together
with the noun-substitutes and other pronouns.
Relatives show the relations between words and
sentences—more correctly, between the objects and
ideas for which words and sentences stand as signs.
Their specialized functions are termed Prepositions
and Conjunctions, which in Modern English are
very numerous and important. There are words
intermediate between the two classes, such as
Relative Pronouns, which stand instead of nouns
and also join sentences.

Classification of Words by Function

English words can also be classed as variable and
invariable, the latter being much more numerous
than in the other great European languages.
The same form of nouns is used after
prepositions and verbs as before them,
although an accusative form survives in some pro-
nouns (*him, her, them*, etc.[1]). Adjectives, except the
demonstratives *these* and *those*, are now indeclin-

Classification of Words by Form.

[1] These were originally datives.

able.   The variations of the variable English words have themselves become very few.

The same tendency towards a single unvarying form is observable in phrases that are frequently employed.   At one time English could say " I asked him how he did."   In course of time " I asked him how he was " replaced the past tense of " How do you do ? "   Similarly, the present of *use* in the sense of " am accustomed " was once common, as in

> For we use, before we go
> To drop a tester in her shoe.
> > *Old Song.*

As the terminations of Middle English died out, the suffixes which persisted, and which indicated function, began to lose their sway.   By the sixteenth century it had become a regular feature of English that the function of a word might be varied without any corresponding change in its form.   Shakespeare's plays contain many instances, as *faint* and *manage*, which, up to that time adjective and verb respectively, are used as verb and noun in

Variation of Function without Formal Change.

> it *faints* me
> To think what follows
> > (*Henry VIII*, II. iii. 104–5)

and

> those that tame wild horses
> Stop their mouths with stubborn bits and spur 'em,
> Till they obey the *manage*.
> > *Henry VIII*, v. iii. 24.

12

This power of variation subsequently decreased, but has revived again, and is in full operation in Modern English. We freely employ the same form as noun, adjective, or verb, as *wire* in " copper wire," " a wire cage," " wire the cage." Even where adjectival or verbal forms made by means of suffixes exist, the simple form of the word can often be used adjectivally or verbally ; we have *faithful* and *faithless*, but we can speak of " a faith cure."

The original and acquired functions of a few of our common words can be observed by a glance at the following tables, which give the dates of the first instances recorded in *The New English Dictionary*. The first table consists of words which were originally nouns and have acquired the verb function in addition ; the second consists of words which were originally verbs and have acquired the noun function.

I

	Noun.	Verb
cash . . .	1596	1811
drift . . .	1300	1600
dust . . .	original English	1592
fire . . .	,,	1225
humour . .	1340	1548
mind . . .	original English	1340
ornament . .	1225	1720
school . . .	1000	1570
shovel . . .	original English	1440
shower . . .	,,	1573
slaughter . .	1300	1535
telegraph . .	1794	1815

II

				Verb.	Noun
drain	.	.	.	original English	1552
draw	.	.	.	,,	1663
drive	.	.	.	..	1697
fall	.	.	.	..	1200
feel	.	.	.	,,	1461
find	.	.	.	,,	1325
hunt	.	.	.	,,	1375
kill	.	.	.	1205	1852
laugh	.	.	.	original English	1690
scatter	.	.	.	1154	1642
show	.	.	.	original English	1300

Humble is an original adjective, first known in literature in 1205 : its first use as a verb is dated 1380. Many of the words in these tables can also be used adjectivally.

The functional adventures of the word *weird* illustrate curiously the changing fortunes which a word may experience. In Old English *wyrd* was always a noun, and meant " destiny." In Modern English *weird* is only used as an adjective meaning "uncanny," or, colloquially, "queer." It is probable that the adjectival function has been brought into general employment in standard English by Shakespeare's use of the term in *Macbeth*, in the phrase " the weird sisters " : it is clear, however, that Shakespeare did not use the word in its modern sense, for Holinshed, from whom Shakespeare got it, explained it in: " But afterwards the common opinion was, that these women were

. . . the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromanticall science " (*The Historie of Scotland*, 1585, p. 171).

There is a still more interesting feature in the evolution of this term, for it has been used as a verb, e.g.

> I *weird* ye to be a fiery snake.
>> *Kempion*, st. 5.

In the same way the Old English nouns *worship* and *witness* have acquired their modern verbal function. Although nö ambiguity results as a rule from the absence of any formal sign of function, instances sometimes occur, e.g. it is doubtful which is the subject and which is the object of

> And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

and what are the functions of *water-lily* and of *bloom* in

> She saw the water-lily bloom.

Although function can be thus varied without formal change, the strong accent of English has **Variation of Function accompanied by Change of Accent.** been called in to supply for many words the place of lost inflexions. As it is impossible to change the incidence of the accent in monosyllables, the operation of this is confined to words of more than one syllable. The verb function is usually indicated by stressing the second or later syllable, the noun or adjective

function by stressing the first syllable. Examples are *présent, preséñt; désert, deseŕt; uńdress, undréss; récord, recórd; cónflict, conflíĉt; rébel, rebél; próceeds, proceéd; réprimand, reprimánd.*

One of the most important characteristics of Modern English is the conventional order of the words in the sentence. Like the Arabic numerals our words have two values, one in themselves and one by position, this latter affecting emphasis, function, and meaning. It is approximately true that Latin words, like the Roman numerals, had only one value, that which lay in themselves. It is only approximately true, for even Latin tended towards a definite order, with the verb at the end of the sentence. In Modern English the natural order is Subject, Predicate; or, if these are themselves compound, Qualifying words, Noun: Verb, and Object; any enlargements of the verb go either before or after the object-words. There are certain recognized variations of this order: an enlargement of the verb can often be moved from one place to another without changing the force and sense appreciably. But the order of words is fairly rigid: it cannot easily be departed from, and most departures alter the type, or the emphasis, or the meaning of the sentence. Alteration of type is illustrated by the fact that a statement is converted into a question by placing the verb before the subject:

The Order of Words in the English Sentence

"You are going" is the statement, "Are you going?" is the question. Variation of emphasis depends upon the degree to which the natural order is disturbed: the more extensive the departure from the normal, the more violent the emphasis. "Great Cæsar, muffling up his face in his mantle, fell at the base of Pompey's statue, which ran blood all the while" is cool and matter-of-fact. But

> And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
> Even at the base of Pompey's statue,
> Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell
>
>   *(Julius Cæsar,* III. ii. 191-3)

is a tremendous climax.

In addition, a word or phrase can be turned into a parenthesis if placed out of its natural order, as in " Happily, the miscreants were shot before they could do further damage." The phrase " of course," which is now used only as a parenthesis, originated as an adjective phrase attached to nouns, and acquired its parenthetical force in this manner.[1]

As regards the meaning of sentences, it is scarcely necessary to do more than mention that, in English, this depends upon the order of words. The Latin " Hominem momordit canis " means the same whatever the order of the terms. But there is much practical difference between the English " The dog bit the man " and " The man bit the dog." It is

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[1] See pp. 28 and 29 n. for an example.

more remarkable that the same is true of phrases, as in " to see it through " and " to see through it."

This feature of Modern English is of the utmost importance for style.   The conventional order seems to us to be the only logical order ; but a comparison with other languages shows at once that this is not so.   Each language in which the position of words in the sentence is of importance tends towards an order to which the speakers and writers become so accustomed that they regard it as inevitable and natural.

So much is this so in Modern English that the great majority of sentences follow the conventional order.   In the first ten consecutive sentences taken from various modern prose authors, the following adhere to it : Joseph Conrad and Maurice Hewlett, nine each; A. A. Milne, J. A. Froude, Robert Lynd, the *Daily News*, Walter Raleigh, and Henry James, eight each; R. L. Stevenson and Walter Bagehot, six each.   In poetry its influence has worked a complete transformation, as is seen, for example, in the practical disappearance of the old freedom of the adjective, by which it could be placed before or after its noun without change of function.

In Latin, Greek, and French all adjectives except the commonest are habitually placed after the nouns which they qualify.   This is the natural order of thought; an object must be perceived and

an idea conceived before they can be described
or qualified.   When the form of the qualifying
word depends upon the form of the
substantive-word, the speed of speech is
too great to allow of the words being
chosen and arranged without hesitation,
unless the noun is placed first.   But, if there is no
concord of noun and adjective requiring adjustment,
the speaker has an easier task, so that it is possible
for him to maintain his normal rate of utterance and
yet place the adjective before the noun.   This is so
in Modern English, where the attributive adjective
normally precedes the noun.   If the adjective is
placed after the noun, its function is often altered;
thus in " To strike a man dead " and " To paint
the fence white " the adjective describes the result
of the action, and the same result is obtained by
placing it next to the verb, as in " She opened wide
the door."

While the attributive adjective of Modern English
conventionally precedes its noun, there is a sur-
prisingly large number of exceptions, some due to
literary influence from old authors, and some to
foreign influence.   *Ago* is an old adjective, being
another form of the participle (*a*)-*gone*, and always
follows its noun.   Most of the others occur in
special phrases, and, except in these phrases, occupy
the normal position.   Such are " time imme-
morial " and " a giant refreshed."   These are

never varied, but in "sum total," "Saturday last," "no man living," and "a fiend incarnate" the bond is weaker. "Heir apparent" and "court martial" are two law phrases of foreign origin which retain the foreign order. "Captains courageous" owes its order to the first line of an old ballad.

It is a very sound rule that the association of ideas should determine the association of words, or, as it is often expressed, that things which are thought of together should be mentioned together. The rule is simple, but, owing to the tendency of phrases to acquire a unity, it is often difficult to apply. The sentence "I answered the question 'last week" contains words in normal order: any qualification of *question* ought to be placed next to it. If such qualification is very long it pushes the phrase "last week" too far from *answered*. But the strong influence of the normal word order nearly always produces, in conversation, such a result as "I answered the question as to where the thief-proof head-lock could be obtained last week," rather than "Last week I answered," etc., or "I answered last week," etc.

The fixed word order and variable functions of English words are closely connected with the number of invariable words and the scarcity of inflexions. It has frequently been debated whether the growth of a fixed word order caused the

The Rule of Proximity.

The Connexion between the Fixed Word Order and the Absence of Inflexions.

disappearance of the English inflexions, or whether
the latter was the cause and the former the effect.
The form of the question, however, evades another
issue, which may provide the solution of the
problem. Probably both these features of
Modern English are effects of a third. English
has developed to a high degree the habit of
breaking up its terms. It seems most likely that
the use of a conventional order may be, as the
decay of significant endings undoubtedly is, a con-
sequence of the progressively analytic habit of the
language.

Modern English, being highly analytic and
mainly flexionless, has arrived apparently at the
stage where the words of a phrase tend
Coalescence. to coalesce again into a structureless
unity. We see this operating in several ways, in
the ease with which compounds consisting of many
apparent parts are made, in the attachment of in-
flexions to the final word of a phrase when they
properly belong to an earlier word or to several
words, and in the lengths to which the principle of
equivalence is carried. An adjectival phrase like
" not yet fifteen " in the expression " a boy not yet
fifteen " tends to be used like a single word; in
" You must be tired of standing in your own light,"
it is more natural to say that *of* joins " standing in
your own light " to " tired," than that it joins
" standing " to " tired." Again, such sentences

as " The trees round the house are very tall, which makes the rooms dark," where the relative pronoun refers to the whole of the preceding sentence, are as natural to us as " The tallness of the trees makes the rooms dark." The advantage of the former method is that it combines two explicit statements —" There are tall trees round the house," " Their tallness makes the rooms dark." The latter method leaves one of these statements unexpressed.

It has been seen[1] that when an inflexion is required by compound words it is added at the end, with results that sometimes seem grotesque to the conservative grammarian.

Detached Inflexions.

In phrases, the same principle is carried still further, so that the inflexion seems to detach itself altogether, and to be applicable to any part of speech, as in the sentence " That is the day before yesterday's bread," where traditionally *yesterday* is in the objective case and is governed by the preposition *before*. Such phenomena are rarely found in print, because caution and habit restrain writers, but they are common in speech. Even such sentences as " He was disturbed by his wife and daughters' entry " and " That is the lady who wore the white dress last night's fan " would pass without remark in ordinary conversation. Neither can be justified on grounds derived from traditional grammar, but the latter is certainly prefer-

[1] Ch. V, p. 105.

able to either of its alternatives, "the lady's who wore the white dress last night fan," which is incomprehensible, and "the fan of the lady who wore the white dress last night," which sounds like a Gallicism.

No doubt, much confusion as regards endings, and consequently small attention to their forms,

The Disappearance of Concord.

were caused by the mixture of races, Saxons, Danes, and French, who before the Middle English Period successively invaded England and settled there. But, if the formal agreement of words had been felt to be important, old formal correspondences would have been preserved, or new ones would have been established (as, indeed, was done with the sign of the plural of nouns). As it was, when concord ceased to be of use, the word-elements which existed for the sake of concord rapidly disappeared. The concord of gender has utterly gone, the concord of case has departed with it, the concord of number has almost vanished. Adjectives no longer agree with their nouns in gender, or number, or case. The verb still agrees with its subject in number, but the inflexions have been greatly reduced, and the irrepressible tendency to violate this concord shows that it too has ceased to be of utility in most sentences.[1]

The removal of concord has rid the English lan-

[1] See Ch. II.

guage of a useless encumbrance : it has relieved the memory of a burden which is still imposed by other European languages, by German, Italian, French, and Spanish, and which as regards gender is intolerable. The average English sentence is no more ambiguous than the average sentence in any of these languages. If he had considered the question, a Roman would certainly have decided that the disappearance of concord would have reduced Latin to a state of complete ambiguity, especially if. as in Modern English, there had been great freedom in varying word-function without formal change. He would have supposed form and concord to be the only, and necessary, means possessed by language of indicating the relations of words. But he would have been wrong. And the same is true of the remnant of the subject-verb concord which still persists in English. We cling sentimentally to this concord ; yet, shocking as they may sound to educated ears, sentences with a plural subject and a singular verb are usually no more equivocal than those formed in the traditional manner.

A very good example of the dropping of a useless inflexion is found in certain nouns. The plural of the vast majority of English nouns is formed by the addition of the inflexion -z, -ǝz, or -s. In Old English there was a larger number of plural endings, many of which were vowels. When the inflexional

<div style="margin-left:2em">Uninflected Plurals.</div>

system decayed the use of -*s* was extended, but some nouns, such as *deer, salmon, sheep,* became, and remained, the same in singular and plural. These initiated a habit of dropping the -*s* where it was not needed. In consequence, certain nouns, when used with adjectives which sufficiently indicate plurality in their meaning, do not take the -*s*. The ordinary plurals of *mile, foot, inch, pound, year, ton,* and *night* are *miles, feet, inches, pounds, years, tons,* and *nights*. But in such terms and phrases as *fortnight* (for fourteen night), *a six-foot (pole), a twenty-mile (ride), a four-year-old (horse), a five-pound (weight), a twelve-inch (ruler),* and *a four-ton (lorry),* we see uninflected plurals. Force of analogy has preserved or restored the -*s* plural of these nouns in ordinary uses ; the preservation of most of the uninflected forms in these cases is doubtless due to their adjectival force, adjectives being invariable. In older literature there are numerous examples of their use as nouns, e.g. :

> " By the faith of my body," then said the young man,
> " It is but five little *mile*."
> > *Ballad of " Robin Hood and Allan-a-Dale."*

The disappearance of inflexions and of concord has not in any way restricted us in the making of functional cases, and in constructing another set of moods and tenses. On the contrary, it has freed the language, so that we can express very many

functional cases : we have also a full set of subjunc-
tive expressions made by means of auxiliary verbs,
and a very exact and elaborate system of tenses.
Further, the remains of the formal gender, which
now exist only in the pronouns, have been utilized
in a new manner. The choice between *his*, *her*,
and *its* is now determined by sex reference only,
and not at all by any noun with which they may
be used attributively. " Il a vendu *sa* maison " is
in English " He has sold *his* or *her*. or *its* house "
—a most significant and far-reaching difference.

By the side of the numerous case-functions there
are only two formal cases in Modern English, one
which has no ending, and one which is
made by the sound *s* or *z*. The apos-
trophe, whether before or after the *s*,
is a mere orthographical device, and has
no representation in speech. It originated as an
indication that an *e* had been dropped, the old
possessive or genitive ending of the singular being
-*es*. The *s* spread from the singular to the plural,
replacing the old plural inflexions, and in writing
the apostrophe was placed after the -*s* of the plural
genitive to mark the distinction of number. Even
the use of this ending, the sole relic of the Old
English case inflexions, has been encroached upon
by the preposition *of*. We cannot easily say " the
phrase's meaning "; we have to say " the meaning
of the phrase." It is restricted to nouns used to

indicate persons, and to a few well-worn forms of expression such as " last night's post," " the road's end," and "life's journey."

The other formal case, which has no inflexion, is employed for all the other functional cases of nouns, nominative, accusative, and dative. It is also used after prepositions. *Of*, however, is sometimes followed by the inflected case.

We are very quick to perceive the different case-functions, although they are not indicated by inflexions. For instance, we cannot say " He spurned and gave the beggar no money " ; we must either repeat " the beggar " to indicate the difference of function, or we must say " He spurned the beggar and gave him no money," which is equivalent, *him* being habitually used in the dative.

In the general simplification of grammar the inflected subjunctive has almost disappeared, and its place has been taken by a compound subjunctive made with the auxiliaries *may, might*, etc. The inflected subjunctive is now used only to express doubt, and in conditional clauses where the subject is a personal pronoun : " If I were you," etc. Even there it is not obligatory. The numerous conjunctions sufficiently convey the force of the subjunctive in most subordinate clauses, and are therefore now followed by the indicative mood. Frequently, either the compound subjunctive or the indicative can be used in subordinate

Mood.

clauses. This is especially true of conditional clauses, as in "If you see the procession, you will be fortunate," which can be rendered by the future subjunctive also—"If you should see the procession, you will be fortunate." The latter form, however, is used to convey a somewhat more remote or improbable condition than is suggested by the form which contains the simple indicative. That the conjunction and the indicative together express what is in many other languages put into the subjunctive constitutes one of the distinguishing marks of English, and is one of the chief difficulties in translating from and into English.

The same progressive substitution has occurred in the tense-system. It has already been shown

Tense.

that the few inflected tenses of Old English have changed into the numerous uninflected tenses, made by means of auxiliary verbs, with which Modern English is equipped. The inflected past tense, made either by the addition of *-ed*, *-d*, or *-t*, or by the change of a vowel in the stem, still remains as a relic of the old system, and there is a large number of forms that are capable of historical explanation, but now appear anomalous, such as *hit*, past tense *hit*; *bring*, past tense *brought*. In addition, just as the indicative is used for the old subjunctive, we find the simple present and simple past used instead of future and other compound tenses. "As soon as he *comes*, let us begin to

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play " is equivalent to " As soon as he *shall* come,"
etc. Similarly, a simple past is habitually used for
a past perfect tense, after a temporal conjunction.
As regards the future tenses, the simple present
forms can often be used with the force of the
future, as in " We return (*or* are returning) home
to-morrow." Since there was no future tense-form
in Old English, this last idiom looks like a revival
of the old habit, but it has probably no connexion
with it.

The distinction between transitive and intransi-
tive verbs is of very· small import, especially as
there is now no formal difference between
a noun when used as the subject of the
verb and when used as its object. Nearly
all English verbs can be used either
transitively or intransitively, and most of those
which cannot take a direct object can be followed
by a noun joined to the verb by a preposition.
Many of the prepositions so used have detached
themselves from the following noun, and have
coalesced with the verb to form compounds, and
the compounds so made have generally developed
new meanings. For instance, the word *bring*, which
can be used with two objects, as in " Bring me some
roses," is also used with numerous prepositions,
such as *up*, *down*, *off*, *on*, *through*, to form transi-
tive verbs of various meanings. *To bring up* means
" to rear," and "to cause to stop." *to bring down*

Verbs used Transitively and Intransitively.

means "to shoot, injure, or destroy," *to bring off* means "to attain or obtain," *to bring on* means "to hasten," *to bring through* has absorbed into itself the meaning of some word following, such as "illness" or "difficulty."

Though words like *bring off* are really compounds, the second part—whether it is called adverb or preposition does not matter—can be separated from the simple verb. Sometimes it is more natural to separate the two, as in "It was a long time before the trainers broke the horse in"; in other cases the two orders of words are employed with equal ease and propriety, as in "They always passed over this unfortunate man" and "They always passed this unfortunate man over."

All such verbs can be used in both the Active and the Passive Voice, and when so used their true nature as compounds is revealed beyond *The Passive Voice of Compound Verbs.* contradiction. The type is illustrated by: "In making promotions, the directors have always passed over this unfortunate man." Here *passed* can be regarded as a verb of complete predication followed by a phrase introduced by the preposition *over*. In the next stage *over* has detached itself from its phrase: the form can now be varied into "This unfortunate man has always been passed over by the directors," where *passed over* is a compound, and in an older stage of the language might have been expressed as *over-*

passed. In this way either of the two substantive ideas (in this case *unfortunate man* and *directors*) can be made the subject of the sentence : we can say, at choice, " The sunshine was playing tricks with the selenium," or " The selenium was being played tricks with by the sunshine " (*Daily News*, 1924). This freedom and flexibility would be lost if the nature of the verb determined which word must be chosen as the subject of the sentence.

When there are two objects either can be used as subject, as in " I was brought some roses " and " Some roses were brought (to) me." It *The Passive Voice with an Object.* will be noticed that in the first instance a passive verb is followed by what would be called in Latin the direct object. This is not an anomaly in English, for very many other verbs, such as *tell, take, hear, give, render, paint,* and *show,* are normally used in the same way. As so many English passive verbs can take an object, great variety of emphasis is possible. " I showed the visitors the garden," " The garden was shown to the visitors by me," and " The visitors were shown the garden by me " are three synonymous expressions in which the emphasis only is changed.

The preceding examples, especially the extensions that have had to be given to the term " object," should be enough to convince the most hardened sceptic, even if there were no other idioms to appeal to, that it is impossible to explain the

structure of English on principles derived from any other tongue. This chapter is but a sketch illustrating that impossibility. To render a complete account of the structure of English, there would have to be added descriptions of particular words and constructions, such as the various functions of the word *one*, the two kinds of English relatives, the pro-verb *do*, the differences between *who*, *which*, and *that*, the idiomatic distinction between *shall* and *will*, and the occasions when the subject or object of the relative clause may be omitted.

CHAPTER IX

THE foregoing chapters were mainly devoted to describing the features of English as they appear

Usages. when words and constructions are exhibited, so to speak, as dead specimens. There are also qualities of language that show themselves only when the language is in process of being used, and some of these, although they are independent of the user, are not easily detached, nor are they easily distinguished from individual peculiarities. There is, for instance, a certain mode of forming sentences which is specially characteristic of Modern English, and we are accustomed to speak of the style prevalent at a given time, and of the style of an author. The last is a personal and literary quality, and is easily recognizable as such; the second can be varied, for some authors in every age succeed in standing outside the prevailing habits of style. But it is impossible for an author, and it would be impossible for the whole body of writers, to alter at will the prevalent type of sentence-articulation. That is national, impersonal, and just as much a characteristic of Modern

English as are absence of inflexions and wealth of vocabulary.

It is difficult to draw a line between these two sets of facts. This chapter sets out to describe characteristics of English which are not included in the previous nine chapters, and to describe some usages, such as the use of rhyme, which, though they can be eschewed, and therefore are not essential, are yet so general that they are as important as features which seem to be present independently of any voluntary action by any persons.

One of the general conclusions towards which our argument has tended—though more by way of examples than by definite demonstration —is that the English language originated, and is originating, in pure irregularity, and that the need for economizing effort has introduced and is introducing whatever degree of regularity appertains and will appertain to it. We find that uniformity is the rule, e.g. that most plurals end in *s* (or *z*), but that there are groups of exceptions, e.g. plurals made by vowel change, such as *foot*, *feet*, and that there are also isolated exceptions, such as borrowed foreign plurals like *indices* and *stigmata*, and idioms, e.g. we must say, " There *are* more reasons than one," but " There *is* more than one reason." In short, reason has produced and is still producing language, but has never completely reduced it to uniformity, and can

Uniformities, Exceptions, Idioms,

never do so. Numerous relics of old irregularity remain.

It is natural that the words in commonest use should be the most irregular, for being most familiar they resist the unifying influence most strongly. In most languages the verb *to be* is the most irregular verb. The early cardinal numerals bear little formal relation to one another, while the ordinals are almost regular. In English the first twelve cardinals contain no common ending, yet the next seven all end in *-teen*, and all the ordinals except the first three end in *-th*.

A second great cause of anomalous forms and idioms is the imperceptible process of decay from which language is always suffering. This Primitive and Acquired produces irregularities which have to be Irregularity. dealt with along with those that are primitive. The uniformities which have been established gradually disintegrate, and have to be reunified, and in the process of reunification some isolated forms and idioms make their escape. Thus all English prepositions now take the uninflected case of nouns, except that the preposition *of* is sometimes followed by the inflected case, as in *this book of John's*; and several pronouns are inflected after prepositions. The former is a comparatively recent anomaly, while the latter is a relic of a vanished uniformity.

A good example of the manner in which English

has rid itself of anomalies is found in the use of. the auxiliary *have* with verbs of motion. Modern

The Auxiliary *have* with Verbs of Motion.

English says " I have come," but the older form was " I am come " (just as the French is " Je suis venu "). The auxiliary *have* was originally the transitive verb *have*, meaning " to possess," and taking after it a noun in the accusative case, with which, to form the perfect tense of transitive verbs, the participle was made to agree in gender, number, and case, by means of its inflexion, while the participle in the perfect tense of verbs of motion and other intransitive verbs (formed with the auxiliary *be*) agreed with the subject. When the inflexions of adjectives disappeared there was no longer any need to have two different auxiliaries for this tense, and no apparent reason why there should be two auxiliaries. So, in course of time, the auxiliary *have*, which was much more frequent than *be* in this use, displaced the latter from the perfect tenses of the intransitive verbs of motion. *Be* remains in languages where the inflexions of adjectives still persist.

The individuality which characterizes any tongue may be said to consist of those general features

The Individual Character of Modern English.

which distinguish it from other tongues and those contradictions of its own general rules which we call anomalous forms or, in the case of phrases and sentences, idioms. In the preceding chapters have

been pointed out numerous features of Modern English which go far to make up its individual character. Such are the great size and mixed origin of its vocabulary, the power of forming compounds without indicating by formal means the relation of the parts of the compounds made, the freedom with which the function of words is varied, the fixed word order and absence of inflections, the extremely analytic character of our sentences, the probability that Modern English words would be longer but for our habit of borrowing, the unstable nature of our vowels, and the strength of the Modern English accent. In addition to these general characteristics, there are a large number of other idiosyncrasies.

Formal influences play upon every sentence that is uttered or written ; they are strongest in poetry, and are present in a high degree in written prose. In ordinary speech we are hardly aware of any such influence, and would, no doubt, if the suggestion occurred to us, conclude that the sole force moulding our sentences was consideration of the meaning. Yet, subconsciously, formal restrictions and habits are prevalent there also.

Formal Influences are Ubiquitous.

In the first place, just as there is a tendency to thrust the accent forward to the beginning of a word, as a nation we seem to prefer to arrange our common phrases so that they end in an unaccented

syllable, or so that accented and unaccented syllables alternate. We say " bread and butter " rather than " butter and bread," " rough and tumble " rather than " tumble and rough "; and the number of phrases constructed on this model is so large, and the number constructed otherwise is so small, that the choice cannot be regarded as accidental.

Secondly, a large number of current phrases contain assonance or rhyme, e.g. " down and out," " high and mighty," " fair and square," " wear and tear," " birds of a feather flock together," " by hook or þy crook," " it is high time that . . ."

Pervasive as this last habit of speech is, its potency is small compared with alliteration : " as bold as brass," " a dull dog," " fretting and fuming," " through thick and thin," " a giddy girl," " a heavy heart," " neck or nothing," " a match-making mamma," " a pretty pickle," and " a ready reckoner "—such phrases as these " leap to the lips." " Widow's weeds " and " as plain as a pike-staff " owe their survival to the alliteration they embody, and the recent advertisement, " Dismayed but not dismantled " owes its inception to the same force. The phenomenon is evidently due to a deep-seated influence, for it is found also in our familiar proverbs, as " A miss is as good as a mile," " His bark is worse than his bite," and " Better a live dog than a dead lion." The last example, it

will be observed, contains transverse alliteration and assonance.

It has been pointed out in the chapter on grammatical structure that in the Modern English sentence there is a very strong tendency towards a normal word-order. No modern author would be likely to write " Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship him declare I unto you." He would arrange his words as " Therefore I declare unto you him whom ye worship ignorantly." This straightforward, simple, or loose structure of the written sentence is essentially connected with the manner in which the sentences are linked together, and with their length. Modern sentences are, on the average, shorter than those of former times. Each clause is self-explanatory; the reader's judgment of the meaning need not be suspended till the end of the sentence is reached. The main idea is stated, and the qualifications are added one by one. In the older type, the periodic sentence, the qualifications frequently came first, and the clauses were built up into a complicated structure. This was more exact in that the relations of the parts were clear if the whole was carefully examined, but it imposed a greater strain upon the attention. The disadvantages of the modern type are that it leads easily to monotony, and that the principle of co-ordination prevents the attainment of the degree of exactness which belonged

to the older prose. This point is of such importance that it is worth while illustrating it by comparing an older piece with such a translation of it as would be the natural expression of a Modern English writer. There is a passage in Milton's *Areopagitica* which runs :

" If therefore ye be loth to dishearten utterly, and discontent, not the mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenuous sort of such as evidently were born to study and love learning for itself, not for lucre or any other end but the service of God, and truth, and perhaps that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose published labours advance the good of mankind, then know that so far to distrust the judgment and the honesty of one who hath but a common repute in learning and never yet offended, as not to count him fit to print his mind without a tutor and examiner, lest he should drop a schism or something of corruption, is the greatest displeasure to a free and knowing spirit that can be put upon him."

That is an extreme example of the periodic style, but it is true to type. It demands close attention ; its elements are marshalled on a feudal principle of subordination ; read cursorily, it is hard to understand ; but it is limited to one point, and it has only one meaping. Translated into modern loose

structure, without more alteration of diction than is necessary, it would run somewhat thus :

" There are two kinds of men who write and publish books. There is a mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, and a free and ingenuous class who were born to study and search disinterestedly for truth. These latter love learning for its own sake, not for gain : they desire it for the service of God and of truth, and perhaps for the everlasting fame which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those who advance the good of mankind by their writings. If, then, you are anxious not to dishearten these men, you must beware of distrusting them. Especially must you believe in the honesty of anyone whose dishonesty has not yet been proved. You must not suspect him of intending to spread heresies, nor of being likely to do harm by his doctrines, if he is allowed to publish his work without its being supervised by a censor. Otherwise you will put upon him the greatest indignity that can be imagined by a noble mind."

This is verbal democracy, for nearly all subordination by rank has gone. Each sentence is clear in itself, but the point of the whole argument is a matter that might be disputed.

To render easy the movement of modern prose, to vary its structure so that it shall not be monotonous, to add to its natural perspicuity an exactness

which shall be unequivocal, demand great care and skill from an author. It is easy to write Modern English badly, difficult to write it well. But exactness, variety, and ease are attained by our authors, and in a high degree. Although modern prose style is familiar, and therefore easily becomes mean, in the hands of a host of writers it achieves dignity and grace. And all this is accomplished within the limits of the strict word-order which has become the framework of the language.

It is common for grammarians,—in moments when they feel thankful that they are not as other men are, or when, carried away by affection for old things, they forget that change is the law of life, and may be for the better as well as for the worse, —to exclaim that the nation has grown careless in its employment of language. Colour is given to the belief by the fact that many speakers are slovenly, and various forms of bad English flourish exceedingly. Yet the complaint does more honour to the hearts of those who bring it than to their heads. It may be true that the modern Englishman is more slipshod and negligent than his ancestors. But no proof exists. The local dialects of the past were more marked than the dialects of to-day. The commercial jargon which disfigures business communications, and the more decorous but equally objectionable official style, have little or no effect upon standard speech and upon literary English,

and can safely be neglected. They are easy game for the literary cynic, but they have no great significance. Similar varieties of bad English have existed ever since commerce and industry and officialdom arose, and will always exist. It is an obvious fallacy to compare the worst of to-day with the best of yesterday.

It is improbable that the modern Englishman is more negligent in speech than his ancestors were. It is difficult to conceive that a continuous improvement in so many directions, in flexibility and variety of constructions, in the contents of the vocabulary and the wealth of ideas they express, in subtlety of distinctions, in grammatical simplicity, —it is difficult to conceive that all these excellences should have appeared, as it were, from the mere momentum of the language itself, while the speakers of it were growing more careless. The human side of language is at least as significant and influential as its natural side, and it is reasonable to believe that the English language has improved because the nation has taken care of it, consciously or unconsciously.

With the disappearance of its inflexions Modern English has gained in conciseness. It has been mentioned on page 34 of this book that a Brevity. modern translation of a piece of Boethius required fewer words than the Middle English translation, and that the words were shorter. In a comparison between English and Latin much the

same result appears. It has been said that Latin is more concise than English. The reverse is the case ; English is briefer than Latin. The relative conciseness of Latin has been thought to be shown by the fact that there are fewer words in a Latin sentence than in the normal English translation of it, and epigrammatic Latin phrases are often offered as standing proofs : *Magna est veritas atque prevalebit* (truth is mighty and will prevail) ; *Semper paratus* (ever ready) ; *Ars longa, vita brevis* (art is long, but life is short) ; *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered). But the proof omits the essential consideration that Latin builds up words while English breaks them down, so that English words are shorter than Latin, and more numerous. The quantity of sound, that is, the number of syllables, affords the real test of brevity. In the Latin phrases just quoted, which are unusually terse, there are 14 words and 30 syllables : in the English translations 21 words but only 25 syllables. In the English *New Testament* there are approximately 250,000 syllables ; in the Latin there are about 310,000 syllables—that is, 60,000 more than in the English. In the Latin Testament, however, there are only about 130,000 words, giving an average of 2·4 syllables for each word. In the English Testament there are 180,000 words (50,000 more than in the Latin), giving an average of only 1·4 syllables in each word.

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Turning now from prose to poetry, we have to inquire what are the characteristics of Modern English verse which the nature of the language has permitted or compelled it to acquire. One approaches the subject of verse with trepidation, because all prosodists seem to differ, and nearly all are dogmatic, and vehement in their dogmatism. It seems that, if the mildest of men entertains opinions upon prosody, he becomes at once a fanatic upon that subject. In his *Manual of English Prosody* Professor Saintsbury reduces all possible systems to three, the accentual or stress systems, the *syllabic systems, and the foot systems, and finds among them no common ground. In the absence of any unifying principle, and because of the great divergences among the competing systems, it is sometimes asserted that the regularity of verse is an insoluble mystery, and that no system adequately explains it. But without other grounds it is scarcely permissible to conclude that, because a mystery has never been completely solved, it is for that reason insoluble. In the space at our disposal, we cannot add another to the long series of failures. But it is necessary to draw attention to certain conspicuous features of Modern English verse, and for this, the beginnings, at least, of a theory are necessary.

The terms of Latin and Greek prosody have been applied indiscriminately to English verse,

either to mean what they meant to the classical grammarians, or, in the hands of accentual prosodists, to indicate arrangements of accented and unaccented syllables corresponding to the classical arrangements of long and short syllables. It is certain that the terms used by the classical grammarians, which excluded reference to accent, were not entirely satisfactory. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the application of these terms to English, even if their meaning is changed, is not entirely satisfactory.

That rhythm, which must be a regular alternation of some kind, exists in all poetry is the axiom from which all prosody must start.

Poetic Rhythm. The most satisfactory explanation of rhythm will necessarily be that explanation which takes in the relevant facts of language most completely. These are that language consists of sounds of considerable length, and that the sounds themselves are made up of syllables. The syllables contain consonants and vowels bearing certain qualitative and quantitative relations to one another; and also differ in that some are accented and some are not, the accents themselves being of various degrees of strength. Until the contrary is proved, there is a presumption that, in all languages, all these elements enter into the nature of rhythm, but that according to the nature of the tongue and the

proclivities of its speakers they possess different values.

Since the sounds are continuous, no separate divisions, such as feet, exist as concrete realities : a foot is a mere convenience of description, and a syllable is only part of a sound. We can say that

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

consists of five feet, and we mean that the metre is a regular alternation of a weaker followed by a stronger syllable : we do not mean that it consists of five separate units, each of which is made up of a weaker followed by a stronger syllable. Similarly, when we say that in the lines of this poem there are ten syllables (five short and five long), we merely mean that each line contains approximately the same quantity of sound : we do not mean that the ten syllables are ten separate entities with pauses between them.

The next question is, In what do this weakness and this strength consist ? There is no doubt that in classical Latin and Greek the length Accent and Quantity. of the syllables was the most important element in poetic rhythm, which means that the ears of the Greeks and Romans were more sensitive to this element than to any other. But if the attempt is made to compose an English rhythm depending exclusively upon this feature, the result is always failure : the rhythm always breaks down. On the other hand, it is easy to

construct an English rhythm by a regular alternation of accents. A very large number of English accented syllables are long, but some are short. Thus in

> The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
>
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
>
> The ploughman homeward plods his weary way
>
> And leaves the world to darkness and to me,

all the accented syllables except three are long, and only one of the unaccented syllables (*wind*) is long. Conversely, there is no perceptible rhythm in the Poet Laureate's experiments in quantitative verse, except in snatches where accent and quantity coincide, e.g. :

> They were amid the shadows of night in loneliness obscure,
> Walking forth, i' the void and vasty dominion of Aedes,
> As by an uncertain moon ray secretly illumined
> One goeth in the forest, when heaven is gloomily clouded: [1]

the reason being that the accents are placed quite irregularly ; where they happen to occur regularly rhythm appears at once. The conclusion is that accent is the most important feature of Modern English rhythm ; or, in other words, that the ear of the modern Englishman is naturally attuned to accent. He hears accent more easily than he detects quantity.

[1] *Poems in Classical Prosody*, No. 21.

One is not warranted, however, in concluding—as is often done—that quantity has no importance at all, and that it does not constitute an element in English rhythm. On the contrary, the proper conclusion may be that the excellence of the metre depends upon the relation that the quantitative arrangement bears to the accentual. For, if the long syllables coincide exactly with the accented, and the short with the unaccented, a bold and staccato effect is produced, while a counter-play of accent and quantity produces a light metre. In short, accent and quantity both enter into Modern English rhythm, as no doubt they did in the case of Latin and Greek; but accent is the dominant partner, while in Latin and Greek quantity predominated over accent.

Our ordinary metres are less regular than those which prevailed in the eighteenth century. The regularity of Pope sounds monotonous to an ear accustomed to modern poetry. To realize that, it is sufficient to contrast a few lines of iambic pentameter from William Morris's *Earthly Paradise* with a few from Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad*.

Modern Metres.

First Pope :

> Thus the blest Gods the genial day prolong
> In feats ambrosial and celestial song.
> Apollo tuned the lyre : the Muses round
> With voice alternate aid the silver sound.

> Meantime the radiant sun, to mortal sight
> Descending swift, rolled down the rapid light:
> Then to their starry domes the Gods depart,
> The shining monuments of Vulcan's art :
> Jove on his couch reclined his awful head,
> And Juno slumbered on the golden bed.

Then Morris :

> Houses we had, noble with walls and towers,
> Lovely with gardens, cooled with running streams,
> And rich with gold beyond a miser's dreams,
> And men and women slaves, whose very lives
> Were in our hands, and all things for delight
> Good to the taste, or beautiful to sight,
> The land might yield.

To Pope the fifth line, with its extreme irregularity, would have seemed a bad line, but actually it is a very skilful variation of the metrical theme. There are other elements, of course, in the difference between the two : such as the stopped couplets in Pope, and the drawing out of the sense in Morris, but the irregularity of the accents is the most important and noticeable.

Besides the regularities of accent, and the combined effects of accent and quantity, there are other constituents of English poetry, which, as they are not always present, must be regarded as nonessentials. The most constant of these accompaniments is rhyme. Rhyme is a powerful adjunct to metre in marking the rhythm, as it cuts the sound at regular intervals, and, indeed, it may be regarded

from this point of view as part of the metre. It is
in origin an intrusion, being borrowed, apparently,
from French : except in one poem it is not found
in pre-Conquest verse, and even in the fourteenth
century it was still struggling with the old system,
in which alliteration did the work that is performed
in modern verse by rhyme. Chaucer's poems are
rhymed, but Langland's contemporary poem *Piers
Plowman*, and a number of metrical romances of
the same period, are in the alliterative metre. To
Middle English, with its numerous similar endings,
rhyme was very suitable. It was easy to frame, for
double rhymes could be found as easily as rhymes
of one syllable. Of the first hundred pairs of
rhymes in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, no
fewer than sixty-two, that is to say, the majority,
are double rhymes. When, in the succeeding
century, the endings of words began to disappear,
double rhymes became rare and difficult. In the
Modern English poem which most resembles the
Canterbury Tales, William Morris's *The Earthly
Paradise*, there is not a double rhyme in the first
hundred pairs. While in Chaucer's time a poet
used single and double rhymes indifferently, a
double rhyme in Modern English has so marked
an effect that in such a poem as *The Earthly
Paradise* it would be a distinct departure from
the scheme. A further consequence is that the
large number of long English words which carry

the accent on the last syllable but one, or last syllable but two, cannot easily be used to end a line of modern verse. This places a severe restriction upon the poet. Words like *indescribable*, *personal*, *perpetual*, *perplexity*, and *tangible*, which can scarcely be used as rhymes in serious poetry, are the very stuff of the language, and are common in ordinary conversation. They are not excluded from rhymed poetry, because they can be placed within the line, but there cannot be too great a discrepancy between the language of the rhymes and the language of the internal parts of the lines without the style of the whole being strained.

Being practically confined, for most purposes, to rhymes of one syllable, modern English poets have found that their bands are too strait, and have been compelled to resort to imperfect forms of rhyme. In this they have been aided by the fact that spelling and pronunciation do not correspond, so that many words which do not rhyme look as if they rhymed. In the following lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude*, for example, there is only one pair of perfect rhymes :

> There was a roaring in the woods all night ;
> The rain came heavily and fell in floods ;
> But now the sun is rising calm and bright,
> The birds are singing in the distant woods,
> Over his own sweet voice the stockdove broods,
> The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters,
> And all the air is filled with noise of waters.

We have become so habituated to imperfect rhymes, the national ear is so insensitive, so slow to detect sounds with exactness, that we feel little disgust at them ; the verse is not marred because the rhymes are not perfect correspondences ; its notes hardly jar upon us ; yet an excess of imperfect rhymes can but be regarded as a blemish.

Some modern poets, the Laureate notably, have attempted to revive purity of rhyme, and with considerable success, and a stricter standard in this matter has been set up, so that, though a poet who uses too many imperfect rhymes scarcely offends the ear, he is felt to miss the highest beauties of which the language is capable. Yet imperfect rhymes force themselves into most poetry with some frequency. In Edward Blunden's poem *Almswomen, poor* and *door, calendars* and *lavenders,* occur in the first forty-two lines, and in G. K. Chesterton's *Lepanto* (143 lines) *far* and *war, sea* and *mystery, sea* and *liberty,* are rhymed. Few modern poets would hesitate, if need arose, to employ such rhymes as *gone, done,* and *stone, love* and *prove, place* and *gaze, heaven* and *given.*

There are other less insistent ornaments which belong to the qualitative side of verse, but which, like rhyme, form elements in the metre, and by their repetitions emphasize or vary the rhythm. They may be regarded as incomplete forms of rhyme. They are consonant repetition,

which is called alliteration, and vowel repetition, which is called assonance.

Whatever the origin of alliteration, which was the constant accompaniment of Old English verse, throughout the centuries the liking for it has remained ingrained in the English mind. As an accidental irregular ornament it occurs frequently in modern verse, whether as an echo of the sense, as in

Alliteration.

> The *m*oan of doves in i*mm*emorial el*m*s,
> And *m*ur*m*uring of innu*m*erable bees
>> . (TENNYSON : *The Princess*),

or without any such intention. Employed in this accidental manner it is much more alluring than the old-fashioned forms sound to us, where it had a constant function and place in the lines. But something very like the old usage survives in modern poetry, in verse that is intended to be specially stirring and emphatic, e.g.

> *B*ritannia *n*eeds *n*o *b*ulwarks,
> No *t*owers along the *st*eep,
> Their *m*arch is o'er the *m*ountain waves
>> (CAMPBELL : *Ye Mariners of England*)

and

> By *t*orch and *t*rumpet fast arrayed,
> Each horseman drew his *b*attle *b*lade.
>> (CAMPBELL : *Hohenlinden.*)

In most contemporary verse, when it occurs, it is used much less regularly, and just as rhyme

joins lines in pairs or groups, it can be used to drag
on the sound of one line to the next, as in

> And all around the *s*nowy *m*ountains *sw*im
> Like *m*ighty *sw*ans. . . .
>
> <div align="right">(J E. FLECKER : <i>Brumana</i>)</div>

and this from W. W. Gibson's *The Ice Cart* :

> *B*ig white *b*ears
> Plunged *h*eadlong down with *fl*ourished *h*eels,
> And *fl*oundered after *s*hining *s*eals
> Through *s*hivering *s*eas of *bl*inding *bl*ue,

and

> O the opal and the *s*apphire *o*f that *w*andering *w*estern *s*ea.
>
> <div align="right">(THOMAS HARDY : <i>Beeny Cliff.</i>)</div>

While consonant repetition can be found almost
anywhere, assonance is a much more uncertain orna-
ment, and comparatively few poets reveal

Assonance.
it. This is no doubt because consonants
make a much greater appeal to the English ear.
Accordingly, assonance finds a small and select
audience. When it is employed to refine the music
of the lines, it is used in exactly the same manner
as alliteration. It can emphasize the parts of single
lines as in,

> Above my h*ea*d the h*ea*ven,
> The s*ea* ben*ea*th my f*ee*t
>
> <div align="right">(<i>The Cliff Top</i>)</div>

or can carry on the sound from one line to those
that succeed, and so link them together, as in,

The wood is bare : a river mist is steeping
The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves :
Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping
Over their fallen leaves.

Elegy.

These are both taken from the *Shorter Poems* of Dr. Bridges, where a very large amount of this kind of ornament can be found. Assonance and alliteration are sometimes used together, as in Stevenson's line

*W*here *white flows* the river and *bright blows* the *b*room.

These are some of the formal characteristics of Modern English poetry.* They are artificial restraints to which the poet submits more

Order of Words.

or less voluntarily, to secure clear rhythms and to diversify them, and to create his consonantal and vowel music. The strict order of words in the Modern English sentence imposes upon him another restriction of the utmost concern to him. In Latin poetry the order of the words could be varied to suit the metre, but frequently, as the Modern English order allows little latitude, the words and sentences themselves are all that can be varied. An old poet wrote :

And to a horse I turn me can,

where a modern poet would be confined to

And to a horse I can turn me,

or

And I to a horse can turn me,

as the utmost permissible variations of the normal.
He must submit almost entirely to the usual order
of the words. This limitation, in conjunction with
the loose form of sentence, and the necessity of
rhyme in a language where rhyme has increased in
difficulty, hedges him round. It is true that these
obstacles, when they are subdued, become aids to
beauty of verse, but that does not make the conquest
easier.

An instance of the difference in this respect that
has come over poetry is found in the attributive
adjective.   It was the custom of poets, where they
found it useful, to place the adjective after its
noun, but it is a verse-solecism to do so now,
with any degree of frequency. Thus in Matthew
Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* (892 lines) the attribu-
tive adjective is never placed after its noun, but in
the same number of lines of Pope's *Iliad* it occurs
in that position sixteen times. Yet the tempta-
tion is as great now as it was then. A more
impressive sign of the increased importance of the
word-order could scarcely be adduced.   And when
it is remembered that the same difference of
principle obtains throughout the whole sentence
structure of both poems, the immensity of the
change that has been imposed will be realized.
The abolition of the conventional position of the
adjective is only a detail in the great transforma-
tion.

CHAPTER X

IT has been very well said somewhere that the study of the mother-tongue is the best introduction to philology. This chapter offers to the reader a few statements of linguistic principles of general application which arise from consideration of the data contained in the foregoing pages.

Language is as old as the human race. It is one of the greatest triumphs of man's mind. Culture and Language. It has been held to differentiate him from the brutes, and, though this may not be absolutely true, none of them can communicate with his fellows with the combined exactness and complexity that human speech permits. It is as universal as man : it is found in use whether we travel to the most barbarous lands or explore the recesses of the most distant past. Its beginnings were for long as obscure as the origins of man : even now, although better methods of inquiry have enabled us to fathom something of the secret, we cannot say that we have yet fully learnt how the power to speak grew to its present state from its first vague efforts. Have all languages a common

origin ? and of what nature were the tongues spoken by the earliest men ? are questions still pondered by those who devote themselves to this branch of study. It is agreed, however, that language has developed concurrently with civilization.

The part that language plays in the development and life-activities of each of us may be compared, in the realm of mind, to the influence of the air upon our physical lives. It is round us, of us, and in us. It surrounds and pervades us to such a degree that we are scarcely aware of its existence and indispensability. Language is indispensable for the development of every human person. Man can look before and after, and through deliberate choice can profit by his own experience and that of others. The outward sign of this power of thought is the possession of language ; or, more precisely, the possession of each is the condition of the other's existence and further development. It is language that enables us to communicate on an extended scale with our fellows, and to utilize racial experience. And because—in the case of normal persons—abstract thinking, except perhaps in its simplest form, depends upon words, or passes through a stage where words are involved, it is language that enables each of us to extract an enlarged gain from his own experience. To

Language as the Vehicle of Thought and of Communication.

represent and support the elaborate articulation of thought a system of symbols must be adopted. In a rudimentary way we can think by means of images of things ; and, no doubt, in earliest youth we do so. In course of time, concrete images give place to images of words, auditory, motor, and visual ; for man has invented word-symbols for this purpose as much as for purposes of communication. In their turn, the word-images are reduced to the extremest tenuity compatible with a structure that must carry the weight of thought : but, concurrently with this reduction, from the depths of sub-consciousness infinite suggestions well up around each word as it is spoken, read, or heard, giving to it the manifold indefinite connexions which make it a useful, graceful, and subtle vehicle of civilized speech and reflection.

The preceding paragraph regards language as the vehicle of thought. Viewed as the means of communication between man and man the symbolic nature of language is equally apparent. In the arc of spoken com-munication, there is one intermediate term, the spoken word or sentence. First comes the idea and then the sentence : this latter is heard, and is retranslated into the same idea by the hearer. Writing introduces a second link. A written or printed word is a visible symbol of a spoken word, which is itself an audible symbol of an idea. A

Language as a System of Sound-symbols.

written word is therefore the symbol of a symbol.

As language exists for practical purposes, its form is determined in accordance, and it undergoes changes conditioned by the same need. We are accustomed to measure a person's intelligence, and to judge his personality, from the words he uses. But he does not create these words for himself by his unaided power, nor are they his exclusive possession. He employs them in common with millions of other persons, with whom he shares a common stock of ideas. Speaking somewhat inexactly, it may be said that a language is the product of the thought of a nation, and reflects its corporate character.

It is convenient to mention here the manner in which the sounds of language express the reality to which they correspond. Since words are signs which owe their meanings to human consent and convention, there is not a name corresponding exactly to every class of natural objects and every class of ideas; for our knowledge is imperfect. There are always cases on the border-line. The convention is imperfect. Language can only symbolize our thoughts, including our prejudices and errors. This is the proof that the belief, so ancient and still so widespread, that names and things have a natural correspondence is false.

Spoken words are more than the outward and

audible expression of a living personality. They are more than symbols made by man to convey his inward and otherwise imperceptible side to some other mind. Being sounds made by the human mouth, they are conditioned by the form of the mouth. Language is a physiological as well as a psychological phenomenon. A proper and complete investigation of it has to be preceded by a description of the organs of speech as well as of the laws of thought. To forget either is a sure means of falling into error.

The Dual Nature of Speech

Language unites a meaning and a form of expression. Each of these is a subject worthy of study. Pursuing the formal line, we have examined some of the changes or inflexions that a word may suffer according to its use in a sentence. and some of the ways in which the different sounds of which a word is composed react upon each other, so as to produce new sounds different from the old. On the other hand, looking at the material aspect of words, we have traced some of the changes of meaning that may appear, and have shown how the various contemporary meanings of a word, though sometimes in apparent opposition to one another, are in reality united in a natural manner.

The Formal and Material Aspects of Words.

Upon every language are deeply stamped the national characteristics and the civilization of which it is the expression. This is true most

obviously of the contents of the vocabulary ; less
evidently, of the form ; every inflexion and every
formal feature of English could, if we
Linguistic
Change. knew enough, be deduced from our history
and civilization. This individuality that
the attentive observer is able to discern in English,
and in any language, is the result of prolonged
development. Men are so accustomed to hear the
same words repeated day after day, in the same
manner or with only the minutest variations,
that it was natural for grammarians to assume
language to be unchanging. Even though the subtler
effects of language evaporate when words are
crystallized in written characters, the comparison
of pieces of literature written in different epochs
is a sufficient demonstration that it changes. The
changes take place slowly and almost imperceptibly,
and for that reason are most powerful in their
ultimate results. The changes that English has
undergone, when they are accurately traced, reveal
the workings of the English mind.

The combination of seeming fixity with real
fluidity makes of language the magnificent instru-
ment that it is. Language is the educator of the
human race as well as its medium of communica-
tion. Of his own unaided energy, the individual
could not hope to understand more than a little
of the world. The slowly-pondered thoughts of
a hundred ages are gathered up in Modern English

and as each person grows to maturity he inherits
the legacy of bygone generations, so far as he is
able to understand and use it. Then perhaps, in
his turn, he discovers that the word-labels which
satisfied his ancestors seem here and there in-
sufficient : he feels the tyranny of words, and, as
soon as he feels it, he gains the power to break it
a little. He finds that to some· extent he can
alter words, or add new terms to the common
stock to suit his new ideas. Even without con-
sciously willing to do so, he will remould speech
a little. Although a rigid system of words might
perpetuate a past notion of truth, no progress
could be made without flexibility.

Being the creation of the human body as well
as of the human mind, language bears everywhere
the mark of its dual origin. The sounds
in use are no more than a selection from
those which the mouth is capable of producing. In
these sounds there are wide limits within which any
alterations from the normal are imperceptible to
our ears. It is this last fact which renders phonetic
change possible. On the other side, the race in-
stinctively fastens upon distinctions of sound that
have been produced gradually by unnoticed changes,
and adds or eliminates. It tends to eliminate what
has become unnecessary or cumbrous, and to
utilize new differences of sound for indicating new
distinctions of meaning and function. Therefore,

Its Causes.

two opposed forces are always at work upon language : the natural tendency of words to lose their formal regularity ; and the rational effort of mind to reduce to order everything with which it deals. Gradually, the operation of these subtle forces has produced a result that, in capacity for expressing ideas and feelings, and the relations and distinctions between them, surpasses anything which the most ingenious of men could deliberately construct.

The primary purposes for which language is employed being to think clearly and to make oneself understood, most changes made by the general will and collective intelligence are in the direction of securing these ends. In the course of this process no forethought is exercised, distinctions are often blurred, and many apparent mistakes are made. But a general tendency can be discerned. Every language that is not dead, or in decay, is incessantly engaged in ridding itself of anomalies that have outlived their usefulness. The process is never completed ; the most energetic tongue retains isolated forms.

It may be asked, whence arose the irregularities ? The answer is that simplicity and uniformity are not primitive but acquired qualities. Or

Irregularity as a Perpetual Quality of Speech.

again, how is it that the original irregularities have not long ago been smoothed away ? The answer to this question is that, in every word all the sounds being exposed to

the possibility of imperceptible change, all living languages are kept in a state of perpetual flux, and, owing to natural forces, would gradually fall again into complete irregularity, were it not that intelligence continually intervenes. The two processes are complementary. The circumstances opposing regularity are so many that it is never attained. The restorative process goes on so slowly that it never reaches a termination. A new balance is always being struck. Before harmony has arisen in one direction, fresh irregularities have appeared in another. The tide of phonetic change washes away the new uniformities before they are completed, or softens and blurs their outlines.

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